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**Industrial heritage presentations: The symbolic representation of differing ideologies
for the political and economic future of Wales**

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This research examines how the presentation of the history of slate mining at three industrial heritage sites in North Wales reflects differing viewpoints on Wales' economic, social, and political situation. I argue that the competing presentations of the slate industry and Welsh miners represent a symbolic struggle among differing local ideologies regarding Wales' future. All three ideologies maintain a reliance on tourism for economic stability but, in each case, market to different audiences. This implicitly speaks to three differing ideological contexts influenced by class relations, political platforms, and economic possibilities for North Wales. The first maintains class inequality and power struggle by presenting heritage appealing to the tourist who, in the contemporary context, represents the upper-class elites. Further, the status of Wales under the political control of the United Kingdom is maintained with seemingly little contention. The second ideology represents economic, social, and political independence from the United Kingdom by presenting a collective image of the working class in their struggle against the elites. These representations speak not only to resistance, but more importantly, to sovereignty. Lastly, the third ideology relies on tourism revenue from foreign audiences who have little knowledge or concern for the historical class struggles between the Welsh miners and the English elites. In this case, authenticity and factual presentation is of secondary importance whereas drawing the largest visitor base and achieving high profits is of primary concern.

North Wales industrial heritage sites demonstrate how representations at heritage sites, though created for a particular purpose and within a particular historical context, are dynamic, understood differently in different temporal contexts, and often symbolic of local

conditions. Further, this research demonstrates that the idea of a single, collective memory presented at heritage sites and museums is actually more complex than it appears on the surface. Heritage site representations are constructed and serve as living narratives which are continually reinterpreted in the contemporary context of the community in which they are situated.

Heritage, Tourism, and Class Conflict

Heritage sites are locations where history is remembered and presented in the present (Nuryanti 1996:250). Studying heritage site presentation is crucial for the study of identity and nationalism because it is through tourist sites that the culture of a particular group is often constructed, reworked, and modified to fit audience interest rather than incorporate full historical reality (Bruner 2005:10). These particular interpretations of the past create new or altered identities for a more easily understood and relatable tourist experience (Herbert 1995:26). These sites create “imagined communities” by presenting a common heritage with historical roots to which seemingly all members of the group subscribe (Anderson 1983:4-7; Pretes 2003:125-127). Therefore, heritage sites provide a venue for the presentation of a national narrative or the collective representation of a shared past while leaving little room for opposition or pluralism (White 2000:505-507; White 1997:3-5). Understanding the broader framing of these narratives—how they are constructed as well as which elements are incorporated can help to uncover the larger social, political, and economic factors at work in the production of national and regional identities (Bruner 2005:19-21).

The rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century prompted the creation of distinct identities which differentiated one nation from another. This has more recently become a fundamental theme in both place-making and tourism marketing. Distinguishing a nation or

region from the 'other' allows tourism promoters to sell a destination more easily through the promotion of different and unique cultural experiences (Waitt 2000:857). Throughout Europe, there has been a push to create and present unique national identities in order to compete with other nations in close proximity who are equally vying for capital benefits from tourism. Heritage tourism has become such an important market, especially throughout Western Europe, most countries now have a tourist board responsible for visitor statistics which analyze attraction and consumption trends of visitors (Richards 1996:262-269). In North Wales, there is not only a move away from the larger British identity; there is a strong regional and local focus which has created a local voice presented through heritage sites. This voice often overlooks the complex nature of historical struggles, specifically associated with the slate industry (Kneafsey 2001:765).

Though some research would suggest that globalization creates a homogenized global culture, the effect it has on tourism and heritage is often quite the opposite. Tourism promoters, to meet the demand for a unique tourist experience, must market a unique national image which will assist in expanding the service economy (Chang et al. 1996:285). As such, heritage site development is shaped by the broader political economy. Harvey (2002:8) claims that interpretations of heritage site presentations are strongly socially influenced and there are pragmatic reasons which influence the inclusion of certain information. According to Alsayyad (2001:5-7), the colonial and capitalist systems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have greatly influenced what is currently presented as heritage. The ideals of the colonial centers determined what was worth remembering and presenting in addition to which aspects of identity and heritage should be ignored. Most often, this relates to former colonies and the presentation of an identity which was marketable to citizens of the

colonizing country (Alsayyad 2001:5-7). Information for presentation is selected on a basis of consumer demand rather than historical preservation or authenticity (Kuipers 2005:206-207). In short, heritage becomes the product which will generate economic gains: the tourist industry and heritage site representations become forms of both symbolic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986:48-50). The middle and upper classes overwhelmingly represent the consumers of heritage who, through their interests and demands, shape heritage presentation. This effectively creates a divide between the tourist class and the service class—those with the knowledge, taste, and preference to consume heritage versus those who merely present it (Richards 1996:267). Elites are the ones who dictate the construction of any image presented as heritage as well as those who maintain power over image production (Peters 2003:128; Osborne 2001:7). Heritage sites have become locations where economic and social power is displayed symbolically.

Class struggles are also symbolically presented at industrial heritage sites. In one regard, the particular presentation of history may favor the elites as a reaffirmation of power and status. Conversely, heritage representations may portray support for the working classes as a way of contesting the status quo. When popularly referenced, the concept of class is often oversimplified by solely looking at economic inequality rather than upon a basis of social solidarity and common experience. In reality, class is influenced both temporally and geographically by politics and social identity (Pratt 2003:14-17). Class identities in Britain were based on the industrial capitalist system of the nineteenth century and the socio-political dynamics which accompanied them. In regards to North Wales, abundant slate deposits in a traditionally non-industrialized area provided English capitalists with a cheap, local labor

force for a commodity in high demand due to the population increase throughout Britain¹. Unions were formed to emphasize collective group interest as well as express class values (Joyce 1991:92-95). Rather than narrowly understanding class in terms of resistance and conflict, co-operation and compromise were also important for union laborers who, through local values, were often seen as stewards of the industry (Joyce 1991:114-121). Though marked by some strain, union structures in Britain were largely preserved through recognition of working-class rights, often used as a mitigating factor to ease the tensions of participation in “non-gentlemanly” work (Overbeek 1990:52-53). Therefore, through heritage sites, the identity of the group is put on display by site creators and administrators alike, as a strategy for preservation of cultural distinction either for or against cultural and political domination by a more powerful nation. This presentation helps to reaffirm barriers, in this case, those of socio-economic class. These proclaimed distinctive cultural traits are put on display and commoditized. Therefore, a distinction between the tourist and the group being toured is maintained (Kearney 1996:162-167). The slate heritage site presentations in North Wales are no exception and have been shaped by the larger political economy. In some cases, a working class dignity and moral majority is presented whereas, in direct contrast at other sites, these images are contested by presentations catered to the taste of the elite or upper classes. In the following chapters, I will highlight three sites which individually adhere to a difference stance in the larger class struggle.

Richard Handler and Eric Gable (1997) set the precedent for not only understanding the image presentation of a site but, more importantly, how such an image is compiled—

¹ Slate provided a relatively cheap, waterproof roofing material which met the demands for the quick construction of new houses and buildings throughout the UK and other parts of the world (Edwards and Llurdes I Coit 1996:349).

specifically noting that history is socially produced and, therefore, heritage site representations are equally subject to social history. Further, they note that though heritage sites have an educational side, they often also have an equally, if not more important business side which influences the presentation of information (Handler and Gable 1997:4-5).

Questions of power and political influence as well as cultural forces and business interests all help to shape museum message displays. Consideration of these factors is paramount to understanding how the broader context influences what history is being presented to the public (Handler and Gable 1997:8-11).

Welsh Heritage Construction

Since the Acts of Union in 1536 and 1542, Welsh heritage has been constructed both in relation to and in opposition to England. Regional divisions due to conquest, industry, immigration, and politics have resulted in what some researchers would coin the three distinct regions of Wales including “British or English Wales,” “Welsh Wales,” and “Y Fro Gymraeg,” otherwise known as the Welsh Heartland (Jones 1992:331-333). Political values and linguistic identification differing between these regions has partially determined what constitutes heritage within each (Jones 1992:331-353). Further, English travel writers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have also influenced contemporary constructions of Welsh heritage due to their privilege, at the time, to produce cultural knowledge about Wales. Some of the themes these individuals attributed to Welsh heritage have lingered and are referenced in displays and marketing both at contemporary heritage locations and by the Wels Tourist Board. Often, these writers would refer to Wales’ Celtic roots as the differentiating factor between the people of Wales and the people of England. Along with these tribal, Celtic images came mythology and folklore which were often associated with the

rural regions of Wales, somehow lost in time. Some writers even referred to traveling westward within Wales as travelling “backward” in time (Gruffudd et al. 2000:589-594). Therefore, the more anglicized, southern regions of Wales were seen as modern whereas the northwestern regions were the strongholds for Celtic ethnicity and “old memories, old beliefs, old habits, and unaltered ways” (Gruffudd et al. 2000:595). These Celtic ideals became associated with the mountainous landscape of the north which was determined by the travel writers as the barrier to progressive English cultural and political influence. Paradoxically, the mountains were also described by these same individuals as a means to maintain Welsh cultural purity (Gruffudd et al. 2000:595-597).

Both in addition and in response to the identifying of Welsh heritage by English scholars and writers, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a time of ethnic revival and increased heritage production in Wales. It is during this period that not only were historically agrarian lifestyles shifting to meet the demands of the transitioning economy; conceptions of Welsh cultural heritage were also changing. According to Prys Morgan (1983:56-91), this is the time in which many of Wales’ traditions were partially, if not entirely invented such as the *eisteddfodau*², tracing lineage to the ancient Druids, the Welsh national dress, Celtic mythology, harp music, men’s choirs, and other similar elements of heritage marketed contemporarily as uniquely and traditionally Welsh. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these elements were then attributed mainly to the northern, self-proclaimed *gwerin*³ populations whereas the southern industrial populations were characterized by scholars and cultural revivalists as much more progressive and

² Literally translated as “session,” the Eisteddfod was and continues to be a festival focused on the literary, poetic, musical, and artistic usage of the Welsh language (Morgan 1983:57).

³ Translated as the “common people” (Gruffudd 1995:52).

modernized—having a heritage closer to that of England. Heritage at this time and from this point on was no longer simply based on historical traditions but also the landscape, politics, and language (Gruffudd 1995:52-59).

Heritage sites and the Welsh Tourist Board have now adopted many of the above heritage themes and “invented traditions” to market sites within Wales to domestic English audiences as well as overseas tourists (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:1-4). Images of Celtic mythology and nostalgia are abundant throughout brochures and performances of various heritage sites nation-wide. Often directly aligned with the Celtic image is the role which the “ancient native language” plays in not only establishing a unique heritage but further, positioning Welsh cultural heritage within the broader European identity (Gruffudd et al. 1999:1-5). In other locations, heritage sites serve as places to “keep memories” of the industrial era and mining history (Gruffudd et al. 1999:11). Linguistic, historical, environmental, and cultural distinctions are presented at many locations in order that Wales not simply be viewed by tourists as “another region of Britain” (Pritchard and Morgan 1998:220-222). These same sites will often include images of Welsh invented traditions like the Welsh flag, the Welsh dragon, the Welsh national costume, the Welsh flower (the daffodil), and even the Welsh vegetable (the leek) (Pritchard and Morgan 1998:220). At the same time, the Welsh Tourist Board markets Wales as a location where, though characterized by a separate and distinct language, visitors need not speak an exotic foreign language because all citizens “speak English fluently as well” (Pritchard and Morgan 1998:225). All in all, heritage is constructed and portrayed in seemingly contradictory ways, depending on the site and region. Specifically, the Celtic influences and traditional Welsh culture of the North is marketed while, at the same time, so are the English-built castles of the region which

were, at the time of construction, used to control the local Welsh populations. Similarly, the “beautiful, unspoilt scenery” of the midlands and border regions is used as a core heritage marketing theme while the accessibility and urbanized centers of the south also account for much of the regionally-based marketing imagery (Pritchard and Morgan 1995:27-32). In fact, these contradictions have motivated researchers like Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan (2001) to question which is the more dominant form of marketed heritage—that of Wales or that of *Cymru*⁴.

The Northwest of Wales provided an ideal setting for this research. With an extensive industrial history, and its assertion of cultural independence from England, the Welsh Tourist Board aims heritage presentation at portraying a separate history based on religion, politics, language, industry, and culture (Smith 2003:63). The Welsh Tourist Board actively promotes the Welsh language and cultural traditions as elements which make Wales marketable to an international audience (Pritchford and Morgan 2000:174). Heritage sites presenting Wales’ extensive industrial history present a legacy which has shaped local economic and political development and continues to affect local communities (Leary and Sholes 2000:57). Therefore, the slate mining regions were determined by the Welsh Tourist Board as a landscape ideal for tourism which would, in turn, help to revitalize these areas (Wanhhill 2000:61).

Methodology

The material for this research project was collected throughout the summer of 2010 by examining narratives presented at three slate mining heritage sites in North Wales. I began research at each site as a ‘tourist’ by participating in the tours offered at each location,

⁴ The name for Wales in the Welsh language.

familiarizing myself with the displays and layout of each location, and understanding the larger presentation of the industry within each site. The initial, familiarizing process was done over the first few days spent at each site. At this time, I also took photographs of the exhibits and displays housed within each site. Once I had a general understanding of how each site presented the slate industry, I introduced myself to site staff and management which allowed me to gain access to first-hand interpretations of each site through site employee interviews. I had formulated an interview guide prior to arrival in Wales, including questions regarding the individual's prior familiarity with the industry, his or her position within the site, what they felt was the intended message of the site, and what each informant understood about the circumstances surrounding their site's creation. For the most part, I was able to interview employees on site during work hours. In most cases, I was able to conduct semistructured recorded interviews with staff. In some cases, however, informal and unstructured interviews were the only way in which I could speak to a few interpreters due to time constraints and their role within their site. These interviews were more casual and conversationally-based while still incorporating many of the questions and themes outlined in the interview guide. For the informal interviews, I took notes directly from the conversation rather than recording and transcribing the responses. My sample was primarily of convenience as I was hoping to speak with anyone associated with at least one of the sites and/or the industry. I was able to speak with site managers, educators, curators, interpreters, and historians which provided an array of different perspectives within each location. As a secondary source of data, I also collected several travel brochures highlighting each location which added to the site presentation analysis.

I divided my analyses into two main parts—that of the image presentation and that of site employee interview responses. I coupled brochure analysis and site presentation analysis into a comprehensive description of each site. The brochures provided information not only on how each site is marketed but to whom different features within each site were marketed. I specifically focused on which elements within each heritage site were highlighted to draw visitors from differing backgrounds in tourist brochures. I also determined the comprehensive image which is presented to tourists at each location, specifically in relation to the slate industry, to understand what larger ideologies each site presentation represented. By incorporating the context in which each site was created in comparison to the contemporary context, I was able to understand not only the social, economic, and political influences behind each site's creation, but more importantly, how these influences affect contemporary interpretation. I paid close attention to which elements or themes of slate history were the focus of presentations within each site to determine what socio-political significance each site placed on such themes which were subsequently presented to visitors. Jointly, I paid special attention to the language of presentation within each site and within site pamphlets and audio tours to determine how each site constructs its audience and the accommodation each site makes for certain language speakers. As noted above, interview responses allowed me to understand how current site employees interpret and understand the presentations at their site and what, if anything, this means on the larger scale of Welsh heritage. I transcribed the formal interviews and was able to gain insight into how employees understood the slate industry and their site's role in Welsh heritage production and presentation. I focused my attention on exploring how site employees saw the story that was presented at their site and what, if any, effects they felt these presentations have on the

surrounding communities. I then synthesized both presentation and interview analyses for each site to determine the larger ideology which each location symbolically represents.

Llechwedd Slate Caverns, in Blaenau Ffestiniog, and *The National Slate Museum*, in Llanberis, are two former slate quarrying/mining sites which have been converted into heritage tourism locations. Both locations provide a venue in which Welsh identity has been reproduced for audience consumption. *Penrhyn Castle*, in Bangor, was the estate of a major slate quarry owning family and is portrayed as a symbolic marker of everything the Welsh miners, themselves, were not. I selected these sites on the basis of location and specific features in which each site focuses its presentation. All three sites are located in county Gwynedd in North Wales. This allowed for ease of travel between each location. Secondly, each site focuses its material on a different aspect of the slate industry. The castle presents the glories of mining and is the most interesting in terms of the portrayal of the Welsh and class divisions. The National Slate Museum incorporates former mine employees as guides for a more authentic feel. Further, the educational focus is on how the slate was processed after it had been quarried. Llechwedd allows the tourists to participate first-hand and experience the inside of the mine—to witness the exact location where the quarrying and extraction took place.

Organization of the Thesis

Though a member of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Wales is represented through tourism as having a distinct identity; in most cases, separate from England and the overarching British identity. Determining the context under which specific heritage site presentations are constructed is a salient theme because it allows for further understanding of why representations are interpreted differently, within different social climates, as a way of

presenting different voices and opinions. Little previous research has established a connection between heritage site presentation and what these representations say about the future of the local community in which they are situated. Therefore, I begin chapter two with a brief history of Wales. Next, I incorporate a description of the current economic, political, and social climates in North Wales with brief focus on the welfare state as a result of deindustrialization. I conclude the chapter by synthesizing how the decline of the slate industry, coupled with political and economic developments of the recent centuries, has resulted in three distinct ideologies regarding the future of Wales. In chapter three, I describe how the history of slate is presented at each site. I also provide a summary of the establishment of each site along with influential factors such as funding institutions, language of presentation and marketing, and surrounding community contexts. I then draw connections between the presentations at each site and the three differing ideologies for the political and economic future of Wales. Chapter four consists of my interview response analyses from staff and administrators employed at the three sites as well as local academics and professionals involved in the presentation of slate industry history. This chapter is the most telling in regards to the *maintenance* of symbolic ideologies for the future. I will draw associations as to why individuals at each institution may be motivated to keep the particular imagery representations. Chapter five will conclude the paper by exploring how the synthesis of the aforementioned elements has influenced the heritage industry in North Wales. I explore what this may mean for understanding how the presentations at heritage sites worldwide become symbolic for the current struggles of the local communities in which they are housed. Lastly, I highlight possible futures for heritage research within anthropology.

CHAPTER 2

The Political and Economic History of North Wales: From Slate to Tourism

Throughout the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, the economy of North Wales was based primarily on slate extraction and processing. Since the slate mine closures of the latter half of the twentieth century, the economy has transitioned to a dependence on the tourism. The process of deindustrialization has resulted in high unemployment and welfare, the expansion of an unskilled/non-specialized labor force, and little investment in the area. There has also been divided political party support between the Liberal, Labour, Welsh Nationalist, and even Tory party in North Wales. I draw connections between political ideologies and the three future economic ideologies outlined in the introduction. I establish that the first ideology transforms heritage presentation into symbolic capital which minimizes historical struggle and privileges elite taste. The second ideology creates distinct divisions between the toured community and the tourist as a method not only to resist cultural assimilation by a larger, stronger entity but also to represent an initiative for local governmental control and policy formation. The third ideology relies on foreign investment through the tourist industry. Displays at such sites present stereotypes rather than incorporate historical reality whereby heritage loses authenticity and becomes primarily commercial.

Historical Context

Often called “the most Welsh of Welsh industries” by historians and tourism promoters, slate quarrying created an industry around which community solidarity and Welsh identity were centered throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jenkins 1992:87). In 1859 alone, wealth accrued strictly from the slate industry accounted for 58

percent of all wealth from business and industry in North Wales (Jones 1982:9). Slate export from the North accounted for 93 percent of the total British slate output in 1882, during the height of the industry (Jenkins 2007:183). Miners were from the surrounding local and historically rural communities which were linguistically, socially, and economically distinct from the English slate barons. Mine owners were English capitalists who not only owned the quarries in which the Welsh laborers worked; they owned the land on which these laborers lived (Morgan 1981:11-15)⁵. Prior to industrialization, landowners had little interest in the land itself other than as a means of supplementary income. With the mining industry came a vested interest in the land as a capital enterprise for predominantly English businessmen (Overbeek 1990:36-41). The labor force for the mines and quarries came from the local, Welsh-speaking, small-scale cattle and sheep farmers who held little capital power themselves (Jones 1981:15).

The booming slate industry furthered class divisions along Welsh/English lines. (Adamson 1991:109). The middle and upper classes residing in Wales were predominantly of English descent, coming from the larger urban areas in England; the laborers were predominantly Welsh. Coming from historically rural areas to work in the mines, the agrarian Welshmen provided an opportune workforce for English exploitation⁶. Thus, Welsh identity in North Wales was defined by a struggle against the upper English classes. There were a select group of overseers and chief engineers, paid slightly better than the quarry extractors and processors, who served as mediators between the quarrymen and the quarry owners. However, these individuals, more often than not, subscribed to the plight of the

⁵ The foundations of the manorial system in Wales dated back to the Norman conquest of 1282 and the Act of Union of 1536 (Adamson 1991:84).

⁶ Between 1874 and 1898, the number of men employed by the slate quarries grew from 14,000 to 16,700 (Davies:9).

quarry laborer rather than that of their superiors because the economic and social distinction between themselves and the laborers was much less than the gap between themselves and the quarry owners (Joyce 1991:31-35). Minimal foreign immigration to North Wales during this time also meant that the majority of the working class spoke Welsh⁷. In 1891, 69 percent of the population in county Gwynedd, North Wales, was Welsh monolingual (Jones 1981:56). Welsh was seldom understood by the land owning families. Quarrymen would often say it was a prerequisite for work as a miner (Jones 1981:60). Therefore, the language was seen as an unquestioned indicator of class division and ethnic identity (Joyce 1991:81-82).

Class was also drawn along political lines during the nineteenth century. Political radicalism in Wales was rooted in a Welsh ideology of nonconformity. Many slate laborers strongly supported the Liberalist cause of land, education, and church reform as well as sentiments of local and national political control. These ideals eventually became the foundations for the nationalist movement in Wales (Morgan 1981:33). The elites, on the other hand, often represented the conservative Tory party which attempted to control local politics (Jones 1981:52-54). Though membership of the Liberalist party did often coincide with divisions of class, support and identification carried an ethnic element as well. The Welsh slate laborers identified with Liberalism and its seemingly radical stance in English politics in the late nineteenth century as part of Welsh cultural distinction from the party of the conservative English status quo, the Tories (Joyce 1991:30-36). A social community of nonconformist ideology and alliance based in unions for the Welsh laborers provided another

⁷ This area of Wales experienced the least Anglicization, compared to the other industrial regions in the East and South (Jones 1981:55-56).

means for separation and exclusivity in the identification of Welshness in opposition to the British-English identity (Joyce 1991:41-45).

Many of the quarries closed in the 1960s and 70s after the demand for slate fell due to the emergence of cheaper building materials. However, a select few locations have been reopened as cultural heritage sites which tell the story of slate—regarding both the laborers and the industry. These tourist attractions created employment opportunities for former miners and provided a source of income for the local communities whose livelihood is now based on a tourist economy⁸. The quarrymen shared not only class and political struggles, but also a common experience and worldview which influenced the ideas of nationalism presented at these sites. This is the identity of a group with a shared struggle against the elites. This struggle manifested itself in Welsh literature, union office meetings⁹, and *eisteddfodau* (Jones 1981:57-58). Influenced by popular aspects of Welsh culture; including poetry, literature, and song, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the collective identity of the working class in North Wales is used as national heritage to exemplify, both within the United Kingdom and abroad, the distinct hard working, nonconformist, nationalist Welsh-speaking consciousness (Jones 1981:68-70).

Current Economic and Political Climates

With high unemployment rates and little external investment, North Wales struggles to sustain itself through tourism and public works. Though county Gwynedd¹⁰ does have a national university, the average annual 12,000 students including graduate and foreign

⁸ Though I have been unable to find statistics directly referencing the percentage of the economy based on tourism, according to the Welsh Assembly Government, domestic tourism in North Wales contributes 33 percent of total volume for all domestic tourism of Wales (2010:1). Nationally, 39 percent of visitors are from abroad mostly coming from Ireland, France, and Germany.

⁹ In the Welsh language, the term is *caban*.

¹⁰ This is the county in which the three heritage sites researched in this project are located.

students struggle to find jobs, especially within their field. According to the *Daily Post*, the newspaper of North Wales, the biggest problems county Gwynedd faces are a lack of quality, professional jobs, especially those with higher earnings. There are few opportunities for young people and professionals as well as a shortage of affordable, quality homes. The increased housing cost is due in part to the recent influx of English retirees settling in the area, which has increased property costs. For the working class, there are few employment opportunities outside of public works and service positions. There is now a push by local government officials and those running for office to increase the standard of living for the area (*Daily Post* 2010).

Within the 2010 Annual Business Review alone, over half a dozen stories revolved around the closing or downsizing of businesses like the closing of Angelsey Aluminium site which resulted in the loss of 400 jobs and the downsizing of Tata Steel by 180 jobs (Williams 2010). Further, there have been several failures or cancelations of proposed building projects like the Caernarfon prison which would have added 1,000 new jobs or the construction of a shopping complex which would have added 450 new jobs (Bagnall 2009).

The lack of employment coupled with the recent world financial crisis has made it even more difficult for North Wales to pull itself not only out of the recession, but to achieve a level of economic stability. During the first quarter of 2010 alone, the number of citizens claiming job-seeking welfare benefits increased by 21 percent (Williams 2010).

Unfortunately, according to business leaders in the area, the private sector is where more employment opportunities need to be provided as state-funded and public sector budget cuts are only expected to get worse. Again, in 2010 alone, over 60,000 public works and local

authority jobs nationwide¹¹ were cut (Williams 2010). Within the region, Northwest Wales saw a decrease from 4,711 job vacancies in 2008 to 2,964 in 2009. Further, unemployment has risen faster in this region of Wales than in any other region of the entire United Kingdom. Earnings also keep falling and for the area; the average earnings are only 88 percent of that for the rest of the UK. Economic inactivity is also higher in this area than elsewhere (*Daily Post* 2009). In the past few years, unemployment rates for North Wales have been on the rise. In the past 12 months alone, unemployment in North Wales has risen by 16 percent (Welsh Assembly Government 2011:4).

Within county Gwynedd, it is important and useful to understand the current economic conditions for the cities and towns immediately surrounding the three aforementioned industrial heritage sites as this directly relates to the underlying ideology each site represents. As noted above, the tourism industry is a primary economic support venture for the area. Ironically, at the same time, local tourist information centers in county Gwynedd have decided to close over the winter, including locations in Llanberis, to save £76 million annually (Trewyn 2010). Unfortunately, this has resulted in the loss of seven full-time and multiple part time positions. Some worry that this closure will also result in a loss of business for the town centers and high street shops where tourist information booths are traditionally located (Trewyn 2010).

For Llanberis, one of the positive business ventures has been the investment and building of Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics manufacturing plant. The German company opened the original factory, located on a former slate quarry site, in 1992. In 2008, they increased their production two-fold which meant an increase of 300 to 400 new jobs (Jones

¹¹ Referring only to the nation of Wales, not the larger United Kingdom.

2008). Because of the success of this venture, the National Assembly Government has attempted to attract more German business investments, even hosting Welsh-German festivals (*Daily Post* 2009).

Unfortunately, in Blaenau Ffestiniog, the employment situation is bleaker. With only a few working quarries left in the area, the Oakeley Quarry was forced to close permanently due to cracks in the surface. 30 employees have now lost their jobs while a lucky few were offered jobs at Penrhyn quarry, owned by the same company (Trewyn 2010). According to the owner of the site, “It is very sad indeed. This is not just about the closure of the quarry, it’s a blow to the town, and the history of the town” (Trewyn 2010). Further, hoping for similar results to that of the success of Siemens in Llanberis, German investment firm Rehau Plastics in Blaenau Ffestiniog has not been as successful and was forced cut 41 positions due to the fall in demand for construction in the housing industry. Again, a major employer in the Blaenau area, the company had to cut another 46 positions the previous year (Powell 2009).

With all of the negative employment statistics and continued job losses, there are local government plans to help revive the area through new green movements and further expansion of the tourism industry. As a supporter of green energy, and a push toward the environmental sciences, yet another wind farm is scheduled to be built nine miles off the coast. The construction and subsequent needed maintenance of these windmills will provide jobs for a number of local people (Davies 2010). Further, upon closure of a local nuclear power station, a German company, Horizon Nuclear Power, has proposed a replacement plant to be up and running by 2020, creating 6,000 more jobs. Unfortunately, when the current plant is finished being decommissioned, those 560 jobs will be lost. This plan has

recently been expedited; original scheduled completion was 2022 but has been accelerated to 2014 to save money (Trewyn 2010).

In Wales as a whole, over 30,000 jobs are directly supported by tourism including the administration, maintenance, and management of sites as well as service jobs catering to visitors in restaurants, hotels, and transportation. Because of this, the Welsh Assembly Government, with support of the National Trust, has decided to pass a £19 million heritage tourism project to make sites more accessible in hopes that this will increase the £840 million annual revenue from tourism (Bodden 2010). Talk of working with Virgin Train Lines to expand service tracks and denote tourist locations on the route listing is just one of the ways in which officials hope to revitalize the area (James 2009). Recently, local government officials have partnered with the Celtic Wave Project to build a port for passenger cruise ships coming from Ireland. This project is marketed as an effort to sell the Irish Sea region as “a unique destination with a wealth of cultural experiences” (NewsWales 2009). Further, by gaining GeoPark status, one of the neighboring counties in the area hopes to promote geological heritage tourism to draw different types of tourists to the region (NewsWales 2009). The majority of local government planning is centered on strengthening and expanding local tourism.

Local Politics and Political Parties

The political parties in the area have been working to address some of these issues and base their platforms on how to stimulate the local community. However, given the divided support for different political parties, little seems to actually get accomplished. Throughout the twentieth century, the local seat position was held by a Liberal party member for the first half of the century, a Labour representative for the next nearly quarter of a

century, *Plaid Cymru* until the turn of the twenty-first century, and since has been held by the Labour party (*Daily Post* 2010).

As mentioned previously, the heyday of the industry was not only characterized by ethnic and linguistic divides, but also political and ideological ones. The quarrymen, whose political foundation was based on a common Welsh ethnicity, were notoriously known throughout Britain for being liberal, non-conformists. The Liberal party's goal was collectivism, support for trade unionism, and activism for industrial laborers against landlordism¹². The opposition consisted of the English quarry owners whose goals were to maintain profits and defend the division of labor. These men often voted Tory and were of Anglican background (Jones 1977:127-131).

The Welsh Nationalism Party, or *Plaid Cymru*, does not have as strong a following in the area as one might imagine given that this region has long been the least Anglicized region of Wales. Founded in the second quarter of the twentieth century as simply a national and linguistic reform movement, *Plaid Cymru* had an insignificant following. At the time, the industries had started to decline and, since industrialization and English ownership of industry in Wales, there was a strong push by the British government for English-only education. Welsh nationalism was existent only in small factions dispersed throughout the country. It was not until the later middle of the century that *Plaid* gained significant support. Membership increased significantly making this the largest opposition in the Welsh National Assembly in 1999 (McAllister 2001:61). Founded on ideals of freedom and independence¹³, as well as the deep-rooted history of a small nation with valuable customs and traditions, it

¹² In this context, landlordism references the historic feudal system where the majority of land was owned by just a few individuals and those who lived on the land paid for its use through their labor.

¹³ In this case, independence is regarded as complete home rule where Wales would have its own recognized autonomous government—self-sufficiency and self-rule (McAllister 1981:247-248).

makes sense that Plaid did not gain much momentum until the nationalist movements of the 60s and 70s to become the power that it is currently (McAllister 2001:66-67). Though a huge proponent of Welsh nationalism and language reform, the North West region still largely supports Plaid but has recently provided strong support for the Labour party (Tanner 2000:273).

Interestingly, the North West region of Wales was not always the strongest supporter of the Labour party either. Though aligning itself with values of working-class areas, industrial harmony, and economic prosperity, the party was often characterized in North Wales as a southern party¹⁴ with little tie to the northern heartland (Hopkin 2000:44-45). Sold as a remedy for unemployment and poverty in working-class areas plus an opposition to capitalism, the Labour party had little support from those who considered themselves nonconformists (Lewis 2000:90). The 1920s and 30s really highlighted the time when the industrial communities spread throughout Wales started to align with one another to realize their common religious, ideological, and working-class struggles (Williams 2000:147-8). It was then during the 70s and 80s that the Labour party also found itself supporting “home rule” and the maintenance of culture and heritage to fit the social climate (Jones and Jones 2000:241-243). Currently, Plaid Cymru is the Labour Party’s biggest rival in North Wales. However, the Tory vote is also strong in North Wales due to retired English voters who have moved to the area (Tanner 2000:269-270).

¹⁴ South Wales is the most Anglicized region, often considered “English Wales” by previous researchers (Jones 2008:1-3).

The Welfare System

The welfare program in the United Kingdom was started after the First World War to reduce unemployment in industrial areas and stimulate production in rural areas. At the time, the “men of Wales” were a specialized workforce with a large percentage in the mining/quarrying industry or metal manufacture¹⁵. This remained so until the 1970s when demand significantly declined and much of the industry slowed or halted completely (Davies 1989:64-65). Throughout the past century, the political parties attempting to garner support in Wales have formulated various welfare and economic restructuring programs such as Plaid Cymru’s 1970 plan to establish nine development centers throughout the country which would each specialize in a different industry. As part of the plan, each region would have housed training facilities to create a local workforce. It was proposed these changes would help build the local infrastructure, especially transportation, and foster economic growth (Davies 1989:74). This plan was one of several that ceased to ever come to fruition.

The welfare system was predominantly run through the larger United Kingdom until the Welsh National Assembly Government was established in 1999. By submitting to the British welfare system, the British standard and centralization became that which was recognized throughout Wales. Therefore, local institutions and governments became wholly dependent on the larger British national government. After the political devolution of 1999, the Welsh Assembly Government gained control over welfare, education, transportation, language reform, and other similar local governmental aspects (Davies 1989:84-85).

¹⁵ Most miners began slate quarrying in their childhood and, in turn, acquired highly specialized skills specifically for the industry. Therefore, the local labor force was most ideal for such work as many were highly proficient before they reached adulthood (Jones 1975:391).

With the expanding welfare system including the National Health Service and Social Security, the Welsh Office, primarily an administrative center, was established to oversee such programs within Wales. This allowed the nationalist movement to regain ground and reclaim a separate Welsh identity through administrative separation. Eventually, this self-administration became one of the strongest arguments in favor of political devolution and the establishment of the Welsh National Assembly (Davies 1989:98).

In order to receive welfare benefits, one must go to the government center, interview with a staff member, and claim that they have been actively attempting to find a job. Colloquially referred to as 'signing-on,' I interacted with multiple people who went to sign-on every two weeks to renew their benefits. Though I cannot claim that they were or were not seeking jobs, the proportion of people signing-on definitely spoke to the poor economic conditions of the area. One of my cohorts in a Welsh class I took openly admitted to the group, when talking about employment, that she was living off the system and would have to miss one class to sign-on. There was no verbal or visual negative reaction from any one in the class which, to me, signified a very normal or standard practice for people of the area.

The Effects of De-industrialization on Heritage

Because the mining industry was the primary source of employment until the mine closures in the 1960s and 70s, deindustrialization has not been a successful process in North Wales. Cowie and Heathcott (2003:2-6) note that, often times, a community is created around a particular industry and when this industry shuts down, transformations in society, power relations, economics, and social life will often occur. They note that, accompanying industrial decline, the working people of the community will often become disillusioned.

Further, if there is little investment in the area, the degradation of social networks and subsequently quality of life are just a few of the results. The International Monetary Fund claims that tourism is the “most suitable export strategy for debt-ridden countries” (Ivanovic 2008:xxi). Unfortunately, when a small economy switches entirely to that of tourism, without other manufacture or industry, the result can be an increase in welfare usage because monetary benefits to the local economy may not be significant (Copeland 1991:515-518). Iverson and Cusack (2000:325-326) maintain a similar argument in that the expansion of the welfare state has primarily been caused by deindustrialization and, in this case, a shift toward a tourist economy because workers in the tourist industry no longer possess marketable or specialized skills. Consequently, employers have little incentive to offer higher wages and/or benefit packages because individual employees are easily replaceable since specialized skills are not required for employment. This leaves workers little room to protect themselves against the economic structure. One final consequence of deindustrialization is the widening wage gap between the labor classes (Rowthorn and Ramaswamy 1997:1). Such inequality is clearly present in this region of Wales compared to the whole of the United Kingdom.

Currently, tourism is the most competitive market in which Wales can compete. The transition from slate to tourism had led to a reliance on tourism for economic security¹⁶. Governmental tourism agencies were created to display Welsh culture and attract both local and foreign tourists (Dicks 2003:35). Regionally, there are differing ideologies regarding just how to sustain tourism. It is through these different outlooks that I explore how the “collective memory” is continuously transformed in response to society’s changing needs

¹⁶ The mine closures of the 1960s and 70s just preceded the heritage boom of the 1970s and 80s in Britain (Harvey 1989:62).

(Zerubavel 1995:4). Through tourism and heritage presentation in North Wales, there are three primary ideologies which reflect how to sustain and expand the tourist industry.

The first relies on the maintenance of unequal power relations. Specifically in regards to heritage tourism, there is a small group of elites¹⁷ who maintain class power primarily through their preferences creating symbolic capital to which some heritage sites cater their displays. Historical reality is effectively muted and heritage is displayed in a way that minimizes struggle. In this case, a safe version of the Welsh/English dynamic is presented to attract a larger number of visitors by, ideally, offending the least. Within this ideology, there is little push for more local, regional, or even national¹⁸ control. This mentality rests primarily on the defense of the historical system; catering to the demands of the few in power.

The second economic ideology actively creates a polarization between the tourist and the toured by accentuating regional difference (Green 2001:175). The slate region in North Wales is seen by some as an ethnic enclave where social solidarity, language, and culture have thus far insured economic survival (Low 1996:387-388). Maintaining this image through tourism is a symbolic method for resisting English assimilation and maintaining control over the future of Welsh identity. The goal is for more local power through political party or even governmental control (Reed 1997:571). Regional policy becomes the means by which social and economic infrastructure will be improved in the geographic areas where it is needed most (Lloyd 1999:701-704).

¹⁷ In the context of heritage tourism, the elites refer to the tourists.

¹⁸ Referencing the nation of Wales gaining complete independence from the larger UK.

The third ideology for moving Wales into the future relies primarily on foreign investment; in the case of tourism, marketing to foreign audiences who will most likely not be concerned with authenticity. This is the point at which heritage sites become theme parks and the primary goal is to entice unknowledgeable visitors to “experience” the history (Frisch 1998:245). The heritage presented at such sites often creates or reinforces stereotypes about the toured (Merrill 2009:15). Heritage sites become commercial; the first and foremost goal is to sell the product (Simon 2005:32). Within this framework, strategies for economic regeneration are left to the private sector (Smith 2003:175).

Conclusion

In summary, the rise and decline of the slate industry in North Wales has resulted in lasting, negative economic effects including unemployment, a growing unskilled labor force with little job security, economic inactivity, and an increase in welfare usage. Historical labor relations have led to divided political support which is still evident in the local community. The transition to a tourist economy has provided some economic support which utilizes North Wales’ cultural history to promote tourism. The synthesis of the above factors has resulted in three primary, competing economic and political ideologies for the future of Wales. The first maintains unequal power relations whereby heritage presentations meet the demand of the middle and upper class tourist. Under this ideology, historically aristocratic preferences are presented at heritage sites to draw a particular type of visitor. The second calls for an economically and politically independent Wales where tourism is strictly based on a distinct Welsh identity. Local tourists and school groups as well as those with a genuine interest in slate history are the tourists to which heritage sites within this ideology market. The third economic ideology relies on investment by foreign tourists where

heritage has solely become a commodity to market overseas. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate how the above outlooks are operationalized by three different slate mining heritage sites in North Wales. The next chapter will show, through a detailed description of each site, how contemporary heritage not only speaks to the past but also about the future of Wales in its proposed move toward a common economic destination—stability.

CHAPTER 3

The Sites: Symbols for the Future

Heritage sites are powerful venues for describing and displaying a unique group or cultural identity (Schouten 1995:21). In this chapter, I describe three slate mining heritage sites in North Wales focusing on the way in which each presents the history of the slate industry paying specific attention to class relations and labor representations. I explore aspects of funding, initial rationale for each location, linguistic accommodation at each site, and intended message of each site to demonstrate how each of these factors not only affect the construction of the image presented but, more importantly, the implicit statements each representation makes about the future of Wales. I draw a connection between the presentations at each site to one of the three economic ideologies outlined in chapter two. First, I describe Penrhyn Castle, the private residence of one of the local quarry owners. This site, though briefly mentioning the miners and their diligent, hard labor is most effective at muting any past struggles between the miners and the elites. Rather than focusing on the Welsh/English divisions, Penrhyn Castle attempts a supposedly neutral presentation. The National Slate Museum presents the ‘story of slate’ by incorporating themes of working-class dignity and the continued emphasis on slate, albeit now through the tourist industry. Here, messages of ethnic and political divisions are still inadvertently present throughout the displays and speak to the maintenance of difference as well as ideas of national self-sufficiency¹⁹. Lastly, Llechwedd Slate Caverns represents the collective history of mining through the presentation of an individual history. Though this character supposedly worked

¹⁹ Welsh independence.

the industry in the eighteen hundreds, his story is a romanticized fabrication of the industrial history purely for customer appeal.

Penrhyn Castle

Penrhyn Castle, resembling a Norman-style castle, was built in the early 1800s by George Hay Dawkins-Pennant who originally made money through the slave trade in Jamaica. His son, Richard Pennant became a locally known slate baron who owned and managed the Bethesda slate quarry, the largest in the area. The Pennant family was one of the wealthiest land owning families in North Wales during the industrial revolution. Lord Pennant served as a Tory party member and previous generations of the family were of English descent. Though the original foundation of the manor was built in 1438, it was renovated by the family in the nineteenth century and stood as a symbol of wealth and power that many of the mine and quarry owners possessed.

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that the castle was sold by the family and acquired by the National Trust. The National Trust is a non-governmental charity foundation established in 1895 by three philanthropists²⁰ concerned with the effects of over-development and industrialization in England. The charity manages historic buildings and monuments as well as preserves natural beauty and undeveloped land in Scotland, England, and Wales²¹. Their stated purpose is to “look after special places for ever, for everyone” (National Trust Handbook 2011:10). Money for management and preservation comes from membership,

²⁰ Miss Octavia Hill, a social reformer concerned with poverty in the urban areas of England; Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, primarily a conservationist; and Sir Robert Hunter.

²¹ British identity is referred to as ‘continental’ and pluralistic; one that encompasses the geographic divisions of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland but that is largely marked by English (Condor et al. 2006:125).

volunteers, donors, and most importantly admissions fees and food and gift shop revenues²². Though the National Trust is headquartered in England, each country in the United Kingdom has its own satellite office. Wales' satellite office is based in the south in Cardiff, the capital and largest city in Wales. Commonly, the National Trust is characterized by all things relating to *English* heritage which effectively homogenizes sites in Wales and Scotland as fitting under the larger Anglo-British umbrella (Johnson 1999:99).

The National Trust's guide book states that Penrhyn Castle is located in beautiful Snowdonia, North Wales and packed with slate furnishings, carvings, famous paintings, and the like. Further, the castle contains a railroad museum, doll museum, and restored servants' quarters. In this guide book, there is no mention whatsoever about the slate industry or the miners. Further, this publication is only in English. Three other brochures, two published by the National Trust and one by a private company in North Wales note Penrhyn Castle as a magical place complete with garden, shop, and special events. Only one mentions the source of family wealth as coming from the slate industry. All three brochures are bilingual Welsh-English publications. A fourth bilingual brochure notes that the castle stands as a symbol of wealth to this day. It states that the family made their money from the slave trade and slate mining. However, it then invites visitors to experience the extravagance. This brochure is significant in that it is the only National Trust sponsored publication that does reference the origin of the family wealth as a marketing technique. However, focus is again drawn back to witnessing the wealth of the family which implicitly markets to those who will appreciate

²² The National Trust has charity status within the United Kingdom meaning that it receives no assistance from the national government.

such Victorian elitist aesthetic ideals. Lastly, a local guide book, not sponsored by the National Trust summarizes the controversy of this site stating that,

“The scars left by the conflict [the Penrhyn strike of 1900] can still be felt in the Bangor and Bethesda areas to this day, and despite the fact that the Penrhyn family contributed a great deal to Bangor’s economic and social life, many people still feel bitter about the family’s attitude towards the quarrymen and their culture (Llwyd:19).”

By understanding the how site presentation differs through different publications, I was able to achieve a better understanding of the ways in which the site is marketed to both local, Welsh-speaking audiences as well as English speaking tourists.

There is a separate *events* brochure highlighting the special events for the year²³ however, the majority of events have little to no relevance to the actual museum, family, or slate industry. Children’s events included ‘Cowboys and Indians Fun Day,’ ‘Alice in Wonderland Fun Day,’ and ‘Knights and Princesses Fun Day.’ For adults, events are more closely related to the house but provide no focus or connection to the slate industry. Themed events include ‘Sugar Craft Demonstration: the Art of Cake Decorations,’ ‘Corsets and Collars: A Peek into Victorian Clothing,’ and ‘Wartime Penrhyn: the Castle during the Second World War.’ It is clear by looking at the event days alone, the administrators at Penrhyn hope to draw not only families and children, but also adults and pensioners who may have an interest in these very loosely related Victoria-era themes.

The management organization at Penrhyn Castle is divided into two spheres; *customer service* and *education and curation*. The customer service sphere has a Visitor’s Services Manager who is responsible for employees, the customer satisfaction experience, and all things business related. The Visitor’s Services Manager decides the budget, events,

²³ 2010.

and organizes volunteers and employees. The educational sphere includes a Property Manager and Assistant Property Manager who maintain the artifacts and inform different parties on changes in the guide book, recording, and programs for school groups. There is a position for Educational Director however the position was empty at the time of research. It is important to note that general employees and stewards are not required to have previous knowledge about the property nor do they need any experience working within heritage sites when they begin employment at Penrhyn.

Once visitors arrive at the castle, they are ushered through the main entrance where they can purchase more brochures, books, and even an audio tour for the castle. Two of the pamphlets provide visitors with information on the walking tour of the house or garden and point out important architectural and artistic features within the house for those that are not interested in paying the fee for the audio tour. Both pamphlets cater to adults with interests in the Victorian history and features of the property. Each pamphlet provides a short history of the house or garden and is available in Welsh or English. The presence of both Welsh and English pamphlets is most likely due to the semi-recent decentralization of the National Trust which has allowed sites in Wales to publish brochures in Welsh as well as English.

Interestingly, the comprehensive guidebook and newsletter that one receives from the National Trust, if they chose to become a member, is still English only which speaks to linguistic accommodation only at the site level and only for the sites in Wales. Children may also pick up an activity book with questions and important details to observe when touring the house. This particular handout is the only one that is solely published in Welsh with no

English counterpart. This is most likely due to the prevalence of local school groups which tour local heritage sites.²⁴

The audio tour costs an extra £6 in addition to the £9.50 entrance fee and is only available in English. The fact that no Welsh counterpart is available clearly constructs the customer as primarily English or, at the very least, English speaking. Within the larger context of the National Trust organization, as referenced above, the availability of an English only audio tour is symbolic for the power of the traditional National Trust tourist who comes from an English first language background. The audio tour takes the visitor on a guided tour throughout the castle, stopping in each room to point out important artifacts, art pieces, or to talk about a member of the family. The tour is voiced in the first person, from the perspective of the male butler of the house at an earlier time in history. Periodically, a female servant's voice will interject other facts or information. The majority of the audio tour only mentions particular artifacts and individuals from paintings, just briefly mentioning slate artifacts like the 9-foot pool table in the library or the supposed slate bed in the guest room.²⁵ Throughout the entire hour long audio tour, there is only one mention of the slate industry. This mention coincides with the description of a famous local painting by Henry Hawkins in 1832 entitled *The Penrhyn Slate Quarry* (see appendix 1). The one-line elaboration of this work in the recording notes that it is a "slightly romanticized picture, perhaps, but still conveys some of the horrors of the industry."²⁶

²⁴ Due to the strong Welsh language revival movements in this area in Wales, many of the local schools are Welsh medium in which students take English language classes as electives rather than the inverse.

²⁵ Later, talking to one of the house stewards, I came to find the bed was not really slate at all but wood painted to look like slate. Upon closer inspection, apparently any layperson would be able to tell the difference.

²⁶ Quote coming directly from the script of the audio tour regarding *The Penrhyn Slate Quarry* painting.

After purchasing tickets and leaving the entryway, the tourist is led into what would have been the main receiving hall of residence. At this point, there is only one direction in which a visitor can take to explore the house. Interpreters stationed in each room as well as signage in hallways and around the staircases denote the direction which one should follow through the maze-like interior of long corridors, grand staircases, and countless rooms. Beginning the tour on the main floor where the library, parlour, and dining room are situated, visitors then venture upstairs to the bedrooms and living quarters only to head downstairs again to conclude the tour in servants' kitchen. Upon completion of the tour, visitors are sent out to the courtyard at which point they can choose to go one of any number of ways; to the doll/railway museum area, the store and café, or the sugar and slavery exhibition room. Visitors from this point on can choose which aspects of the house they are interested in seeing or which they would rather bypass as there is no longer a structured route to follow.

I visited the site on several occasions and, during all of my visits, the majority of visitors seemed to be either nuclear families consisting of parents and their children or extended families with grandparents, parents, and grandchildren all present. The second most common demographic seemed to be older couples and retirees. One of my research days did coincide with a children's theme day and the number of children and families increased significantly on this particular occasion. The staff at the castle also added additional child-specific activities which were not a part of the normal presentation including carnival-type games where children could pay £1 to play, food carts stationed on the lawn, and costumed employees who greeted children with excitement and enthusiasm. The goal of these events was to bring in even more family visitors who, with younger children especially, may not appreciate or find as much enjoyment in many of the adult-catered displays like the

furnishings of the house, the railway museum, and the sugar and slavery exhibit. In actuality, aside from a brief walk through the house, possibly some of the train engines or dolls in the museum, and the servants' kitchen due to its costumed interpreter, the displays at the property do not seem to cater directly to children. However, as seen through some of the brochures and activity books produced by the National Trust, families with children are one of the National Trust's major demographic support groups.

The remodeled Victorian kitchen is the only location in the house with a period-appropriate, costumed guide. This woman answers any questions visitors may have about the kitchen area. Though the perspective of the kitchen is intended to show what cooking would have been like on such a large scale for all the members of the family and household, there is a secondary, underlying focus on how good life was for servants who worked in the Penrhyn household. Visitors can buy a book outlining the inner-workings of the servants' quarters. This book describes why the house was designed the way it was, the prestigious members of society who visited the castle including special events and meals which would have been served for important and royal visitors, and pictures and descriptions of different food preparation rooms as well as servant living quarters. Only one side bar throughout the entire 24 page booklet mentions the source of the family's wealth—attributed to the slate mine which the family owned (The National Trust 2001:6).

The doll museum and garden have no connection to the slate industry and no mention of the family or the slate mines is made at either. The railroad museum is loosely tied to the mining industry in that it houses many of the trains and engines used to transport the slate from the quarry to the shipping port. An introduction to the railway museum notes that the stable blocks of the house were previously unused by the museum and it only seemed

appropriate to incorporate some of the industrial elements of the slate industry into the property. Different locomotives are displayed and described in conjunction with their functions within the mine. The Quarryman's Car is described in terms of being "powered by muscle" which did not hold the quarrymen back from "having bump-races with other crews." Unfortunately, no mention of the actual pragmatic usage is included in the display which, again, takes focus away from the significance of the industry (see appendix 2). Having fun through cart racing is a way of presenting the laborers as enjoying their jobs; making it appear as though employment as a miner was a positive and happy experience. Implicitly, it presents the relationship between miners and quarry owners as copasetic. This presentation minimizes grievances the miners had with the slate barons and likewise, their objections to the way in which the industry was managed. Meanwhile, a Saloon Coach is displayed nearby which shows the style in which the slate quarry owners would travel to their quarries. These cars clearly display wealth and comfort, full of amenities not seen in the other locomotives (see appendix 3). As the intermediate, the Overseer's Carriage is displayed in regards to being "little better than the quarrymen's." This carriage was not powered by the individuals riding on it but was little more than a wooden bench, still in stark contrast to that of the quarry owners.²⁷

The final portion of the railway museum is a small exhibition room which presents the chronology of the industry through display boards and a comprehensive timeline that briefly mentions why slate was an important commodity during the heyday of extraction. It notes that the family already had a significant amount of money from the slave trade and

²⁷ All information in the above paragraph is taken directly from displays and placards in the railway museum at Penrhyn Castle.

were simply taking advantage of the population increase in the British Isles which had led to an increased demand for slate roofing and construction materials. It even notes that Penrhyn was generous enough to build homes for the slate miners' families on his land and some gladly accepted these *generous* gifts. Unfortunately, the display does not go into further detail about the nature of the relationship between quarry owner and miner. Here again, there is a reference to *The Penrhyn Slate Quarry* painting and it is reprinted and coupled with a few lines on the "Penrhyn Legacy." In this section, the visitor learns that returns from the mining endeavors did not come until the late 1870s and, after the turn of the twentieth century, the industry steadily declined. The display also notes that the housing in the town of Bethesda is still inhabited today and was built by quarrymen, without the help of Lord Penrhyn. Lastly, the display leaves visitors with the notion that the slate tips²⁸ "have a grandeur" and should be witnessed to understand the slate industry's "rich legacy."²⁹

The last important aspect for analysis comes from the 'Sugar and Slavery' exhibition. This section of the exhibit notes the men of the Pennant family were self-made, savvy business men. For the most part, the exhibition outlines the Pennants' role in the slave industry, how they became involved, and what this meant for the livelihood of the family. Various display boards mention wealth as an asset allowing the Pennants to own multiple properties, send their children to schools in England, host lavish events, and take costly vacations. However, these images are coupled with images of slavery and comparisons of the slave trade to the slate industry. Quotes from local historians are incorporated into the boards including one from Professor Merfyn Jones, a well-known Welsh historian, noting

²⁸ Refers to the mountains of slate waste material discarded from slate mining. For every one ton of usable, extracted slate, nine tons of slate waste is created.

²⁹ This quote is taken from the slate industry timeline in a separate room of the railway museum as part of the larger museum complex at Penrhyn Castle.

that, “Richard Pennant was quintessentially a Liverpool merchant, one of that particular breed of merchant princes grown wealthy on the slave trade and on that most primitive of systems of capital accumulation.”³⁰ Though this particular quote is specifically in reference to the West Indian plantation system, parallels are drawn throughout the exhibition to how Lord Pennant ran the slate mines. Another quote from the exhibit mentions Pennant’s rules for his slaves included not over-working them, caring for them when they were ill, and treating them with humanity.³¹ Similar statements are made in reference to the slate miners in that homes were built on the Penrhyn estate for the miners and their families which they “gladly accepted.”³² However, no mention of the complaints from the miners about their working conditions or the longest industrial action strike in Britain, staged by the miners against Lord Penrhyn, are ever mentioned. Toward the end of the exhibition, as an apparent consoling statement to the history that only those familiar with the industry or the area would be aware, a display notes that the Pennant family still did great things for the mining communities by building schools, churches, and a miner’s hospital.

Throughout the displays at Penrhyn, there is little focus on the slate miners. The focus revolves around the fact that the Penrhyn wealth came from the slave trade and, secondarily, the slate industry. When the industry is mentioned, the visitor receives the image that though the slate miner had a hard life, life was not *that* bad because these men had the opportunity to work in the “new industry.”³³ There is an overpowering image of the men of the Pennant family as smart, persistent businessmen who simply took advantage of the

³⁰ This quote comes from the *Slavery: The Penrhyn Connection* display board within the larger “Sugar and Slavery” exhibition at Penrhyn Castle. No published, literary source has yet been found for this particular quote.

³¹ From *The World the Slaves Made* display board within the larger “Sugar and Slavery” exhibition room.

³² From a display board as part of the slate industry timeline housed in within the railway museum.

³³ Taken from the timeline display housed within the railway museum complex of Penrhyn Castle.

situations presented to them. It is almost as if, when regarding the time period, there is an excuse made for their capital accumulating techniques because of their aristocratic status and regardless of the expense to others. This imagery has the effect of maintaining culturally and socially imperialist ideals and power relations (Nash 1989:38). Rather than incorporating the miner's perspective, presentations at the property promote nostalgia by presenting historical Western/English aesthetic values and tastes in art, architecture, dolls, and even the garden (Dahles 2001:6). These are the features which are marketed in the tourist brochures, intended on luring a particular type of tourist—one with similar tastes and ideals who will find such displays appealing. Further, the tourist is constructed with very specific regards to language. Though the site does offer Welsh pamphlets to accompany the English counterparts, the audio tour is only available in English as are the non-region or site specific National Trust brochures. This demonstrates that the organization, as a whole, envisions the tourist primarily as English speaking with only slight accommodation for Welsh language speakers who visit sites in Wales. Some industrial elements are incorporated into the displays but again, as objects to marvel rather than to remember those who used these items on a daily basis as a part of their livelihood. Further, the only point in which lower or working classes are truly represented is in the servants' kitchen and quarters. Yet, even here, there is a justification made for the practice of keeping human servants because, not only was the property sizable so help was needed to maintain such an estate, the servants at Penrhyn Castle were treated *well* according to this presentation. This theme is highlighted throughout the guidebook for the kitchen again, as a way of minimizing any conflict that may have been. Clearly the displays at this site both appeal to and continue to represent the historical elite of

the British isles from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which reinforces the division between the aristocracy and laborer.

The National Slate Museum

The National Slate Museum is another living history attraction in the north of Wales which, through official narrative and photographic presentation, provides a history of slate mining in Wales. This former mine, Dinorwig, was one of the biggest producers of slate in the entire north of Wales, during the 1870s and 1880s. Although the museum is located at a former mine, the emphasis of a visit to this particular location is to create an understanding of the effect of the slate industry on Welsh society as well as demonstrate slate processing after quarrying has taken place. Dinorwig was a self-sufficient mine where all tools were made and all processing took place on site. It is within these workshops that the museum is now housed. The National Slate Museum presents the Welsh as a resilient, industrious, Celtic people who, through language and culture, resisted the influence of English nationalist slate barons. According to this particular identity, the slate miners and their families suffered exploitation by an economic system from which they received little personal gain. Rather than being taken advantage of linguistically and culturally, these men supported their families and found creative ways to keep Welsh culture alive.

Films and photographic representations as well as slate splitting demonstrations from former miners and incline tours from the education director help to provide a well-informed story of the slate industry. An important point here is that the National Slate Museum is part of the National Museum of Wales which is funded by the Welsh National Assembly. According to the National Museum, the National Slate Museum houses “powerful memories of danger-filled human endeavor” which “are kept alive” at the museum (Houlihan

2007:103). Further, this site received, among others, the 2005 Welsh Tourist Board's 'Sense of Place' award (Houlihan 2007:103). This site not only presents the mine worker identity and history on the industry, it attempts to represent the whole experience of a Welsh miner, his family, and his culture.

The National Slate Museum is situated at the base of Dinorwig quarry in the heart of the Snowdonia Mountains in Llanberis. Quarrying here took place on cliff faces and mountain sides. Quarrymen started at the base of the mountain and worked their way up creating elaborate incline systems as they ascended which helped to haul the slate from the top of the quarrying level to the base of the mountain for transport to the shipping port. Dinorwig quarry was owned by Lord Penrhyn's biggest rival, Lord Assherton-Smith. He employed similar techniques of quarry management, especially in terms of miner/owner relations. The quarry at Dinorwig closed in 1969 after a worldwide decline in the demand of slate. The National Slate Museum was opened in 1972 at the site of the quarry's workshop as a tribute to the memory of labor history. The workshop was self-sustaining in that all tools, pipes, gears and other machinery items were produced on site by pouring liquid metal into pre-cut wood patterns³⁴. Originally, the museum was managed and curated by Hugh Richard Jones, a former Chief Engineer at Dinorwig Quarry. He had no previous museum or educational experience but was able to purchase through auction, with the help of other former mine employees, many of the original tools and machinery used by the quarry. Further, with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund³⁵, the museum was able to restore one of

³⁴ The slate quarries of the area were responsible for creating distinct slate quarrying technology which was quite revolutionary at the time (CADW 2000:9).

³⁵ Administered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund was established in 1994 to distribute a portion of the money raised through the National Lottery for heritage sites, parks, and historic

the inclines to working condition which is now incorporated in the museum's educational demonstrations.

Originally, all employees at the museum were former miners who demonstrated their craft and the quarry equipment. Though the museum still prides itself on employing experienced former miners as interpreters, it also employs experts from other fields. Former miners still put on slate splitting demonstrations, a task done by hand to this day at the few remaining quarries in the area. Former miners also give tours of the mechanical and tool rooms of the museum where the carpenters would have made the necessary tools, gears, etc. from carved wooden molds. The current curator of the museum is a local Welsh historian who used to work at Bangor University and has written several books regarding the general history and politics of the slate industry. However, the educational director or other available staff member gives a guided walking tour of the quarry. During one of the tours, the educational director was training another member of the staff in order that he would eventually be able to do the same. Neither had any experience working in the mines. In fact, the educational director was primarily interested in slate from a geological standpoint as she was currently studying geology and land formation for her degree. The staff member in training was a former Padarn park ranger turned slate museum employee. Other events visitors can partake in include crafts for children and a more detailed look at iron gear and tool pattern making.

As previously mentioned, the Slate Museum is housed in the former workshop of Dinorwig quarry on Lake Padarn. The lake and surrounding area are incorporated into

Padarn Park, an area devoted entirely to tourist endeavors. While walking to the entrance of the Slate Museum, visitors can also take a scenic lake railway tour on the railway formerly used to transport slate, a pleasure boat cruise on the lake, try a high-ropes course challenge in the remaining wooded area, take a dive in one of the quarry pools, or visit the quarry hospital museum. Each of these attractions loosely associates its experience with the history of slate mining, whether directly related or not.

One bilingual brochure for the area, published by the county government council, notes the “magnificent” Slate Museum as a must-visit attraction.³⁶ It further tells a short history of the area, intended as a playground for the wealthy, and how the development plans for the area turned from mansions and golf courses to industry; namely, slate. Another brochure, published by the Tourism Partnership of North Wales, states that the National Slate Museum is responsible for providing insight into the history and heritage that is the slate industry. Padarn Park’s brochure tells about the history of the slate industry, only briefly mentioning the Slate Museum itself. The brochure goes into further detail about the wildlife and geology of the area. Presumably, the more educational focus of the brochures for the Slate Museum is directly related to the primary goal of the site—education and the retelling of the history of the industry.

Once the visitor enters the workshop complex, they are ushered into the gift shop to receive a map and other brochures. Entry for The National Slate Museum is free because it is a member of the National Museums of Wales. It is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and receives no sponsorship from the larger British government. Brochures

³⁶ Quote taken directly from the *Llanberis: Discovering Snowdon's Village* brochure produced by the Gwynedd Council and the Llanberis Development Group.

provided by the museum detail specific aspects visitors can expect to see including the recreated quarrymen's houses, *Fron Haul*; the film entitled "To Steal a Mountain," a fifteen minute film on the history of the slate industry in the area; a brochure on the foundry including steps for casting; a pamphlet on the refurbished incline; one on the yard machinery; a general history of the slate industry; and information on the shop and café on premises.

The museum also provides a teacher's guide to help make the experience more educational and interactive for students. Once visitors reach the recreated village, there is a work booklet for children to complete as they visit each generation's house. All brochures are either bilingual or printed in separate copies of Welsh or English. All displays signs within the site are presented in Welsh first and English second. Films are either in Welsh with English subtitles or alternate between Welsh and English versions if narrated by a third party.

Clearly, there is a preference toward Welsh language speakers though English speakers are secondarily accommodated to the same level. An interesting note is that The National Slate Museum has brochures which call for Welsh language support for learners interested in bettering their Welsh. The museum has activities posted on the National Museums of Wales parent website specifically related to their displays and the history of the industry. The fact that not all Welsh speakers are fluent in Welsh may be a secondary reason as to why English displays are equally important throughout the site. All in all, it would seem the site markets and accommodates to Welsh-speaking tourists first and English-speaking tourists secondarily, though no significant preference toward either is overtly demonstrated.

Though not mandatory, the museum recommends visitors watch the film first, especially if they are unfamiliar with the story of slate. They are also given a flier highlighting the times for different demonstrations and activities throughout the day. At this

point, though there is no strict path to follow within the museum, the museum is generally laid out in a manner that visitors begin just outside the gift shop, completing all exhibits in an arch pattern, then finish at the gift shop once more, which serves as the entrance and exit threshold.

Throughout my time at The National Slate Museum, the majority of visitors seemed to be families with children of all ages. The site is accessible for all ages because historical information is incorporated into the displays which would likely interest adults who visit the site but, at the same time, many of the exhibits and tours are interactive where children and adults can directly interact with the tour guide or participate in activities as part of the exhibit. In fact, during the slate splitting, audience members are called to the front as volunteers to try for themselves. On one particular occasion, I witnessed a school group during this demonstration and the interpreter specifically adjusted his presentation to entertain and make the experience more relatable to the children by mentioning children who worked in the mines throughout history and what their roles may have been. Further, activity brochures are provided for the recreated housing which, again, helps make the experience more relatable for children. The site does indeed construct its visitors as families with children by creating displays which will be pleasing for all members of the family. More generally, The National Slate Museum displays interactive exhibits for any and all interested in learning about the industry.

Following the unspoken route, the first stop is the recreated Chief Engineer's house whose living quarters would be at the head of the workshop complex. According to the sign located directly outside, the Chief Engineer would have been considered a middle-class citizen; not reaching the level of quarry owner wealth, but not as poor as the average miner

(see appendix 5). This is one of the few signs on which women are mentioned in the entire museum and according to this display, their task was simply to take care of the household and provide a good home for the men to return to after a long day at work. This housing complex is much more sizable than the recreated quarrymen's houses which present a visible contrast in wealth and material goods.

The recreated quarry houses, Fron Haul, were reconstructed from other real quarry houses in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area, transported to the National Slate Museum, and rebuilt in 1998 to display living quarters at three different times throughout the history of mining in the area. This recreated village is meant to provide visitors with "a story full of hope and magic as well as sadness and poverty" (National Slate Museum Website, accessed 2011). The first house, dated 1861, presents to visitors in the description of the house that perhaps two families would share the small living space. Also, at the time, the mine was the main employer in the area. The house is very sparsely filled with furniture and food. A workbook in the kitchen for kids to complete asks them to take a look at the table setting and whether or not it looks as if there would have been enough food to feed an entire family.

The next house represents 1901 living arrangements during the beginning of the Bethesda strike (see appendix 6). In the window, the museum placed a sign reminiscent of ones used at the time stating "Nid oes Bradwr yn y ty hwn" or, "no traitor in this house." Further, the information provided in this house states that, with the father out of work, the family would have depended on the wage of the wife and children who may have entered the service industry for wages. However, the guidebook notes that even though the father on strike from the mine was a hardship on the entire family, he would never betray his fellow miners. This is just one of the many locations where the male miner solidarity is presented as

an unquestioned aspect of the Welsh slate miner identity. Though the gender dynamic is not a central focus of this thesis, it is important to note that there is little representation of women throughout the presentations at The National Slate Museum. The museum was created by male miners who envisioned the miner identity and larger industry as a masculine endeavor. This translates directly to the larger scale of heritage site representations in that heritage presentations are largely shaped by the people who create heritage sites. The attitudes which site creators hold are translated into site presentations and reflect the ideologies which these individuals hold. Thus, different heritage sites are symbolic representations of a myriad of ideologies in any given context or community.

The last house is dated to 1969 and has all the modern furnishings of the time. This house is meant to show the quarryman and his living arrangements just prior to the mine closing. The guide book notes that, “The husband has just been told that he is out of a job, in an area where unemployment already runs high” (National Museum of Wales 2009:43). As part of this display, the guide book points out the posters and album covers in the teenage son’s room representing the son of the family as completely against the investiture of Prince Charles of Wales and in favor of an independent Wales. Further, he is portrayed as listening to nationalist music and hanging controversial posters on his bedroom walls. This is the only location in the entire museum that references the strong nationalist movement of the 1960s and 70s in Wales.

Continuing around the arch, visitors learn about the workshop where the refined skills of the men who worked at the quarry made the entire endeavor possible. Further, the slate demonstration workshop is filled with images of miners throughout the years. Displays notify the reader that the slate splitter had a connection with the slate which allowed him to

split it successfully. Ironically, there is also a display board denoting the different sizes of slate tiles, all named for the English female aristocracy such as Queen, Duchess, or Lady. Signs in other various workshops tell about the marvel of Victorian engineering and the men's ability to power the different systems and tools within the warehouse. Visitors may also view Britain's largest water wheel which powered many of the on-site tools. Further, visitors are presented with maps of just how far the slate traveled before reaching its final destination. The focus on 'Welsh slate roofing the world' is emphasized as an unquestionable asset to the world.

The final part of the unspoken tour portion takes visitors to a workshop area where the different uses for slate are displayed. There is a reference to the roofing function but local artists have also contributed craft works for the display to demonstrate how slate is used contemporarily. Visitors can also see a recreated *caban* or cafeteria area where the men were said to inform one other on local events and news, recite poetry and perform music, and debate on local or sometimes completely irrelevant issues such as; which is more useful and necessary, a wife or a sheep? According to the sign outside this location, the *caban* was composed of a hierarchy of miners and it was out of these meetings that "political movements were born, and football teams and choirs were organised."³⁷

The last portions of the museum are the temporary exhibition rooms which rotate periodically. During my visit, a photographic exhibition entitled "Quarry!" showcased local photographers and residents who were asked to photograph or submit photographs of the mining locations or miners themselves. Throughout these two exhibitions rooms, recent photos were juxtaposed with historical ones, sometimes depicting the same location,

³⁷ Quote taken directly from *The Caban* display board in the National Slate Museum.

sometimes contrasting the miner of history to the miner of today. The neighboring room displays the actual tools of the quarrying process itself and each display case shows historical photos of the different tools employed in context.

Obviously, the images presented at the National Slate Museum fall directly in line with that of the previously mentioned hard-working, resilient, industrious men of North Wales. Few locations within this site convey a sense of pity. Rather, they present cultural distinction as a positive testament to the men of the slate mining and quarrying industry—the men who overcame and thrived in light of exploitation and domination (Richards 1996:280). Even cultural outlets such as the caban meetings and eisteddfodau are mentioned as a means by which this particular identity was able to resist “collapse and decay” (Gable and Handler 1996:568). This particular location is intended to be a source of pride and accomplishment, highlighting the revolutionary engineering and labor that encompassed the entire process of slate extraction and manufacture. The workshop was considered self-sufficient and this directly relates to the underlying ideology presented at this site—that Wales as a nation should be self-sufficient and autonomous culturally, politically, and economically. Further, the fact that all signs and displays are presented in Welsh first and English second truly speaks to the identification with an identity very separate and distinct from that of England (Lo Bianco 2003:30-32). However, accommodations are still made for English-only speakers as well as non-fluent Welsh speakers. As mentioned earlier, all mine employees did not hold the same position; some were overseers, chief engineers, and general middle-men or ‘go-betweens.’ However, there is never any mention of these individuals’ relations with the mine owner. Rather, seemingly for solidarity’s sake, they are lumped under the large group of laborers and presented as having the same struggles. This is most likely to portray the

image of a united front against the elites as a means of justifying the historical tensions and, perhaps, even contemporary ones.

Llechwedd Slate Caverns

Llechwedd Slate Caverns is located in the foothills of the Snowdonia Mountains, in the city of Blaenau Ffestiniog. Visitors receive the first images of the slate industry as they enter the town from the north on the single road leading through the area. Either side of the highway is covered with slate tips and mountains of slate waste. This area always seems a little darker and a bit foggier than the surrounding areas. Miner-style housing and former buildings used by the industry still pepper the landscape. Llechwedd Slate Caverns is one of the few remaining slate producing complexes in the area. Though to a significantly lesser degree, employees in a different mining section from the attraction still extract slate using more mechanized methods than would have been employed historically.

Llechwedd Slate Caverns is a former mine which opened in 1836, with the labor force consisting of the Welsh speaking local community. Llechwedd hit its peak production between 1849 and 1895 (Jones 2006:1). Situated on five main slate beds, 16 levels of caverns make up the complex at Llechwedd. Contemporaneous with the National Slate Museum opening, Llechwedd opened as a tourist attraction in 1972. This attraction, of the three, is arguably the most popular and most frequently visited by tourists. This attraction takes visitors physically into the mines on former tramways which attract families who prefer an experience rather than simply reading sign boards. According to the guide book published by Llechwedd and for purchase at the ticketing office and gift shop, readers gain a little insight into the mining industry and the community around which it was formed. Blaenau Ffestiniog came into being solely because of the mining industry. The guide book notes that

this was an entirely Welsh speaking town which grew in population due to the industry. Other brochures, one published by the Attractions of Snowdonia and the other by Go North Wales highlight the adventure and mystery of descending into the actual mine caverns where men worked for centuries. Further, the brochures invite visitors to visit the onsite store, recreated town with sweetshop and tavern, and the recreated town bank. There is no mention of learning more about the slate industry or its history. Only one quote posted on website for Llechwedd Slate Caverns alludes to some of the history and politics of the situation noting that “work at Llechwedd not only provided a wage but created a vibrant society full of political debate, poetry, song, and a stronghold for the Welsh Language” (Llechwedd Slate Caverns Website, accessed 2011).

Llechwedd provided an ideal venue for this study because historically it was not only one of the largest, fully functioning slate mines in the North, it has now been fully established as a tourist site. It must be noted that Llechwedd Slate Caverns is privately owned by Greaves Welsh Slate Company Ltd.³⁸ and is primarily a for-profit venture. With this being said, the official Llechwedd tour guide book is filled with explanations of the awards it has won from various tourism institutions throughout the UK, the publicity it has received from the Welsh Tourist Board which claimed, “Llechwedd Slate Caverns have probably done more in recent years to promote an interest in Wales’ industrial heritage than any other site in the country” and includes photographs and dates of famous visitors (Jones 2006:6). Through its website promotion, it boasts that visitors will gain insight into Welsh

³⁸ J. W. Greaves bought the slate beds which Llechwedd currently incorporates into its presentations in 1849. The company still owns these caverns and, in some neighboring units, minimal slate extraction still takes place.

society at the height of the industry including history from the political, cultural, and linguistic spheres.

Upon entering the complex, visitors are ushered into the ticketing line where the manager of Llechwedd is more than willing to convince visitors to try both the Miner's Tramway and the Deep Mine tour. Both cost separately and an individual can partake in the two tours for the cost of around £16. The Miner's Tramway takes visitors over a half mile into one of the mining caverns where they are met by an employee and exit the tram. Visitors take a seat on wooden benches and wait in the dim light for the employee to begin his presentation. He talks about the tools used to drill holes in the cavern wall for dynamite. He gives one lucky audience member a chance to try hand-drilling with Victorian-aged tools. Here, he focuses on the difficulty and danger of slate extraction. After he concludes, he walks the group to a neighboring cavern where robotic mannequins with pre-recorded speeches circulate telling audience members about the four-man slate extraction teams. Each member of the team tells visitors his role within the group. There is also a mention of the caban, though only briefly with an emphasis on the place where the miners ate their warm lunches and sang and danced. The broader social meanings in regards to solidarity and language maintenance of this institution are not mentioned. Visitors are then escorted to a waiting area where a makeshift wooden ladder has been fashioned and the employee notes that one man, once per month, would take the role of checking the safety and security of the top of the cavern. Therefore, he would have to climb this ladder, without any safety net, to check the ceiling. Fortunately, the employee notes as a consolation, the miner would receive a bonus for this.

Once the train returns to the surface, visitors exit to the slate workshop where an employee is waiting to demonstrate slate splitting. There is no mention that this person is or was a miner at one point, and there is little engagement with the audience other than a simple nod or half-smile at the end of the presentation. The feel of this demonstration is not to educate but rather just to entertain. The lack of interaction with the audience may be due to the fact that the employees are not formally trained and perhaps do not have (at least outwardly) a strong interest in the industry. Here, if visitors are interested, they can purchase slate crafts like house numbers, coasters, and magnets.

The Deep Mine tour was not opened until 1979, seven years after the rest of the complex, to draw a larger audience. Most displays have changed little since the site opening in the 1970s. However, the audio and light technology throughout the site was upgraded in the early 1990s. The tape-scripts still remain the same. But, upon request, visitors can hear the program in German, French, or Welsh. The assumption here is that, even if the visitor is from another EU country, they will have some competence in English. English is afforded superior status within the site and, though other linguistic accommodations are made available, this is only possible if the visitor goes out of their way to request special equipment. Further, the language translations are only available on pre-recorded tours, whereas, during the slate splitting demonstrations, in the recreated town where employees are stationed in the sweetshop and bank, and on the written displays, English is still the privileged language. This is an important aspect which distinguishes the presentations at Llechwedd from the previous two slate heritage sites. Both Penrhyn Castle and the National Slate Museum market to English and Welsh speaking audiences only. The availability of

continental European language resources for visitors to Llechwedd truly reinforces the initiative to market to foreign audiences.

In the Deep Mine, visitors are asked to put on a hard hat before boarding the incline train. Once again, the train descends into the mineshaft when, reaching the bottom, visitors are asked to deboard. This area is a self-guided tour where visitors are ushered through ten different caverns by audio recordings and wall postings. The purpose of the audio tour is to follow a day in the life of one particular miner, Sion Dolgarregddu, and hear his story. Sion's voice tells you that he started work in the mines at the age of 12 in 1856. The low lighting and eerie voice are meant to demonstrate what it would have been like to work in only candle light and to create the essence of Sion's ghost. Throughout the tour, visitors learn a little about the town of Blaenau like how there were more churches than pubs in town, Lloyd George's³⁹ visit, brief mention of the cabanod and their role in Welsh literature and poetry, and the importance of the Welsh language. Sion mentions that few miners spoke English but Welsh literacy was also low. At the end of the tour, Sion asks visitors to remember the miners who gave their health, lives, and livelihood to the mines by taking a moment of silence over the reflecting pool.

For this portion of the tour, the guidebook mainly focuses on high technical quality of the tour rather than the history or heritage of the industry. Throughout the Deep Mine sections, references to awards the tour has won as well as the Euro Disney contractors who came to work on the project are made ad nauseum. Further, readers learn the voice of Sion is a local actor and the background harp music is played by a Plaid Cymru⁴⁰ leader's wife. This

³⁹ Former Prime Minister of Britain from 1916-1922. Liberal Party leader from 1926-1931.

⁴⁰ The Welsh Nationalist Party.

could be interpreted as appealing to the local community by incorporating those affiliated with the nationalist community. On the other hand, it could also demonstrate to international audiences that those at Llechwedd are sympathetic with the Welsh nationalist cause and, to a non-local, this may appear quite impressive. Not enough can be said about the Disney-like, world class attraction worthiness of the Deep mine tour. However, little detailed historical context or factual information is provided.

The recreated village allows visitors to explore a bank, tavern, general store, and candy shop. The bank displays Victorian coins and visitors get a chance to see what prices would have been for various goods in the late 1880s. The tavern supposedly offers traditional meals, like stew or pasties, which would have been consumed by the miners during their long days in the mine. Just outside the village complex, visitors can view one of the steam engines used to transport slate to the nearest port which was miles away. Only upon further inspection of the guide book can visitors learn more about the political and economic troubles of the miners. There is short mention of a strike that took place at Llechwedd in the early 1890s. However, after this one paragraph, there is no further historical information.

The last exhibition at Llechwedd focuses on the tools used by the miners during the nineteenth century. There are photographic displays as well as some reconstructed tools. Visitors can learn more about the different tools or processes if they press the button at each display to listen to a pre-recorded audio description. In the background, visitors hear recorded 'sounds of the mine' which attempt to create an atmosphere as if the visitor has traveled through time and is standing in the fully functioning quarry. All recordings are in

English and all signs are English language first for this exhibit and, if at all, Welsh language second.

Apparent in my descriptions of the site, Llechwedd is most closely related to an amusement or adventure park, albeit on a much smaller scale, where the focus is experiencing the rides. Subsequently, Llechwedd markets to customers who will appreciate such adventures—namely, families with children who will appreciate riding a refurbished mining tram into a deep cavern much more than reading display boards at a museum. As noted above, the management at Llechwedd envisions families with children of all ages as their main visiting demographic. In most cases, Llechwedd constructs these tourist families as English speaking, not necessarily first language due to the push for continental European customers, but at the very least, English proficient. If, however, some of these families or all the members within these families are not highly competent in English, they do provide other options for their main attractions only. In this regard, the two rides which take visitors into the mines are the key attractions at the site. The other displays and even the tourist book available for purchase are secondary and tertiary elements because most of these aspects of the tour are only available in English which may not be accommodating for all foreign visitors.

Throughout my visits, the only parties whom I witnessed visiting the site were families—many with younger children. In fact, my presence as an individual seemed to disrupt the normal traffic flow on the actual rides because the cars for each tram held even numbers of individuals (two for the miner's tramway and six for the deep mine tour). Because I always took up part of a car in either case, I often sat in a car alone or, in the case of the larger car, a smaller family would join. Otherwise, if too few spaces were available for

all family members to board a particular tram, the whole group would often wait for the next round. Therefore, the set-up of the site caters specifically to larger groups where multiple people can experience a tour at one time. These groups are most often composed of families who experience the tours together.

Clearly, the audience to whom Llechwedd markets is vastly different from the previous two sites. Rather than school groups, local families, and visitors from just over the border in England, Llechwedd tries to entice an international audience by putting on a show with lots of lights, sounds, and special effects. The purpose here is to attract as many tourists as possible without providing a “serious education” (Gable and Handler 1996:570). The story of the industry becomes that which is romanticized, as seen through the telling of Sion’s story, but largely ignores the importance of the industry in creating a regional identity and social solidarity (Summerby-Murray 2002:50-54).

Conclusion

Each of the above site presentations can be loosely attributed to an “interpretive gateway” as highlighted in Johnson’s work on heritage tourism in Ireland (1999:193). Interpretive gateways are thematic focuses around which heritage storylines and displays may be constructed to present a simplified, coherent, and relatable tourist experience. Each of the above heritage sites inadvertently incorporates a similar strategy to represent the industry in a way which is also symbolic of class struggle. The presentation at Penrhyn falls under Johnson’s (1999:193) category of “making a living” where the ideology is simply that this was that way things were. Though it is not an explicit defense of the oligarchic system, there is no mention of opposition to unequal power relations throughout the site which effectively privileges the elitist taste and perspective. This follows to the economic ideology

where the tourism status quo is maintained through heritage site representation in that it is shaped by elite-tourist demand.

The presentation at the Slate Museum coincides with “building a nation” where, again, contradiction and plurality is largely ignored (Johnson 1999:190). In this case, an “imagined community” is created where the story of slate is presented as collective inheritance linking all members in the formation of a distinct class—the Welsh slate miner (Anderson 1983:6-7). These symbolic representations follow an economic and politically independent ideology where Wales dictates itself, rather than be dictated by the British government. Lastly, Llechwedd’s presentation is most closely “the spirit of Wales” where an idealized, separatist identity is presented with little historical foundation or authentic basis (Johnson 1999:190). Llechwedd symbolizes a move toward foreign investment dependence where images, displays, and language accommodations are designed to draw a foreign tourist audience.

Clearly the inspiration for the establishment of each site coupled with a consideration of site creators and current funders significantly and directly influences which versions of history and representations of the industry are presented for tourist consumption. As I outlined above, each of the three sites observes an economic and political ideology which Wales may adopt as it steps into the future. In the next chapter, I take analysis of these divisions one step further by drawing connections between Welsh identity representation and implicit ideology still maintained by site employees within each location.

CHAPTER 4

Administrator Interviews, Underlying Ideologies

Understanding viewpoints and interpretations held by the original creators of heritage sites as well as the context in which each site was created is just as important as understanding the way in which current employees reinterpret site presentations. As suggested in the previous chapter, heritage site presentations are directly reflective of the attitudes held by initial site creators. These attitudes are indirectly incorporated into displays which are continually reinterpreted by current site employees. This chapter highlights interview responses from site employees and other community members with knowledge and familiarity to not only the slate heritage sites but also the history of industry in Wales. By analyzing these interview responses, I demonstrate that, though displays at each site have been interpreted in the contemporary context, they are still strongly influenced by the values and standards which the historical site creator(s) held. Though each site was created to present industrial history and attract a tourist base, each site now symbolically represents a larger economic and political ideology. The employees at Penrhyn Castle are largely influenced by the foundations on which the National Trust was established—to conserve historical locations and aristocratic ideals. Presentations at this site cater to historically aristocratic interests and, though there is mention of gaining more local control to change displays within the site, few steps are taken to make this happen. The National Slate Museum was established by miners who had recently lost their jobs in the slate industry. To counteract job losses, they decided to start a museum in which their craft, and subsequently their political and social ideology, was presented to a broader public. These ideals have not only been maintained by the site but also translate to the national scale in regards to

Welsh/English political and economic relations. Llechwedd Slate Caverns was also established to recover job losses but more importantly, to increase profits for the quarry company. Contemporarily, this means marketing to foreign audiences who will not question the common history which is presented with the primary goal of increasing audience base.

Penrhyn Castle

Penrhyn Castle provided the best source of employees, managers, and other affiliated persons for interviewing. Upon arrival on my first day at Penrhyn, I was warmly welcomed. After introductions and explaining my goals for visiting, I was immediately introduced to the site manager who, through continued contact, pointed me in the direction of several other individuals who, he felt, would be both willing to interview and would provide more critical insight for the research project.

The site manager, William, whose official title is Visitors Services Manager, considered himself the “new boy” at Penrhyn only having worked at the castle for 15 months. Originally from Southwest England, William came to North Wales for work, running his own business (always in the customer service industry—training and personnel, specifically) until he applied for the job at Penrhyn. Still attempting to learn Welsh, William felt it important to speak the language noting that in the area, “British tourists don’t understand, rather than ‘when did you learn Welsh?,’ up here, it’s ‘when did you learn English?’” (Interview, July 19, 2010). Basically responsible for all things dealing with visitor satisfaction, the Visitors Service Manager was not required nor did he have extensive knowledge on the Pennant family, the history of the area, or the slate industry. However, living in the area for 20 years enabled William to learn some of the contention between local Bethesda citizens and the legacy of the Penrhyn family. He noted that “some of the older

generations are still bitter, still would not come here. In the local community there is still some hatred” (Interview, July 19, 2010). Though he wished this was not the case, and not the least for business purposes, he also seemed to understand that these emotional scars had been passed through several generations and were not ones that would heal quickly.

Though William was primarily responsible for budgets, property management, and as always, trying to get more customers, he did understand the importance of providing a more factual story about the family and the industry in an attempt to, “update the presentation and dispel the myths” (Interview, July 19, 2010). Currently, there are no Welsh language audio tours at the castle which William felt would help bring in more visitors. Being responsible for all things customer service meant William was the individual to receive both compliments and complaints about the location. From visitors, primarily families, pensioners on holiday, and school groups from the surrounding area, most compliments would be to the effect of amazement at the beautiful artwork and praise for the uniqueness of the castle. Infrequently, William would receive complaints on how vulgar the location was to commemorate “such a man” (Interview, July 19, 2010). He presumed these types of complaints came from locals who still maintained resentment toward the family.

Understanding that the way to get more visitors to the castle meant reaching out to the surrounding communities, William had several ideas he was intending to implement (at an undetermined time) to “go local” (Interview, July 19, 2010). He felt that having free entry days for the local community members as well as Welsh-only advertisements might help to secure local support due to the prevalence of first language Welsh speakers in the region. In keeping with “what was always done,” many of the children’s and adults’ special events had little, if any, relation to the castle and its history (Interview, July 19, 2010). Whether it was

because I had mentioned my interests in the industry and the goal of my research, or if the sentiment was truly genuine, William noted that he wanted to bring in programs, “...connected with slate, demonstrating slate splitting, and having a link to the quarry” (Interview, July 19, 2010). He felt that the castle “should be a source of pride [for the area] but isn’t. Some see the grandeur and splendor and the amount of money that was here” (Interview, July 19, 2010). He noted that this offends some of the locals whose fathers and grandfathers worked in the mines for small wages.

In defense of the family’s philanthropic endeavors, Martin stated that their behavior was, “...quite normal for their day, with servants well looked after...who built houses and a church in the village of Llandygai...” (Interview, July 19, 2010). William noted that the history of the family, both the positive and negative aspects, is not really a focus of the presentation at the house. The family did donate to the local community—building homes, churches, and schools, even for the mine employees, however, the family is still to many locals commonly thought of as evil for not only their involvement in the slate industry but also slave ownership which provided much of the family’s initial wealth. When the site was originally established at a heritage location by the National Trust, the whole of the interpretations were designed and produced by the head branch in England. Later, I learned from the Assistant Visitor Services Manager that it was not until recently the National Trust has allowed for more local control over trust sites by regional offices and within individual sites. All in all, William claimed that with,

“The whole nationalistic thing, I am not particularly happy because we are a Welsh property, and I will do everything I can to change that. I would like to get Welsh-speaking volunteers. I am proud and determined we are going to become more Welsh. Something the National Trust is getting better at is linking up with more properties in Wales (Interview, July 19, 2010).”

He seemed to be fully motivated and more than ready to initiate his new programs but noted that, as with anything, it is just a matter of time.

Jane, the Assistant Visitor Service Manager provided more insight into how the National Trust, as an organization, was changing to give more power to the individual sites, through more regional offices. First, however, I was able to learn a bit more about the workings of the site with significant overlap to William's statements. Jane was from the area and had been working at Penrhyn for the past three and a half years. She had known a brief history of the site before coming to work at Penrhyn through school trips as a child.

For the most part, she confirmed much of the information which was relayed to me through William regarding plans for a new Welsh audio tour, a change in activity days and programs, and a push for more Welsh language advertisements and speakers at the site. She, however, felt that the intended message of the location was, in fact, for, "...people to see the wealth these people had, where it came from, how it was made, and the life of the servants and family" (Interview, July 22, 2010). She felt that there was, "...a balanced view of the facts, that Lord Pennant was a terrible man and part of the aristocracy, but that there was a good side as well" (Interview, July 22, 2010). Here, she was referring to his philanthropic efforts for community development projects such as church, school, and hospital building.

Jane noted that, "Through new exhibitions, things going on for the local community, and more through the Welsh medium, the site could help the next generation move on" (Interview, July 22, 2010). She informed me that prior to the past few years, all the properties in Wales were just lumped into the *Western Region* by the National Trust. According to her, "Wales was seen as a region not a country," by the larger National Trust

organization (Interview, July 22, 2010). Within the past decade, Wales received a branch office of the National Trust in Cardiff to oversee all Welsh properties. Recently, the National Trust also put in place a North Wales regional office in the neighboring town of Llandudno. With more local control, individual site managers and administrators have gained more control over site displays. The regional office in the south, Jane stated, was how the castle was able to add the “Sugar and Slavery” exhibit and revise the guidebook (last updated 2008-2009)—basically providing more autonomy to do things “in-house” (Interview, July 22, 2010).

Through a series of informal interviews with a former administrator of the site with Theo who had been retired for 12 years but still volunteered as a steward at the castle, I received a more in-depth history of the house and the family, along with a slightly different perspective on the family during my private tour of the site. Theo was an English-born current resident of Wales, married to a Welsh woman. Though I never learned an extensive personal history of Theo, he did share with me his interest in the site and considered himself an ‘unofficial historian of Penrhyn Castle.’ In fact, one of his neighbors was a descendant of the family and an avid historian on all things related to the Pennant family. Theo informed me that the Pennant family was actually Welsh not English so many of the English/Welsh divisions were unfounded, at least in the slate mining context though, I have yet to find any documented evidence of such information. He did confirm that there was a major divide between the owners and workers and that, “People were much more class conscious in the past” (Interview, July 19, 2010). He did pay respects to the miners noting that they were, “...intelligent workers, orators, and were articulate” (Interview, July 19, 2010). However, in regards to the strike, “They got greedy. Penrhyn built the first hospital for the workers, the

first place to use anesthetics, and donated money every year to the union” (Interview, July 19, 2010).

Upon reaching the servants’ quarters, Theo also noted that, “Servants used to fight for jobs, food, heat, and clothes but at the Penrhyn Castle, this was all provided” (Interview, July 19, 2010). Though most of this information was not sparked by any display while touring the facility, Theo clearly felt it important that he enlighten me with the *true* story of the family. He did not feel the displays at the location needed to be adjusted for any reason because, according to him, the behaviors and employee/employer relations were completely normal and sound for the time period.

Though I was not able to interview her supervisor, I did get a chance to interview Miranda, the House Steward. She had had this position for over a year which could be equated to Assistant Curator. Her responsibilities included object conservation, inventory, collections management, object interpretation, and the updating of displays. Though South Walian born, she lived throughout her childhood in various parts of England and Wales. Her extended family had been involved in the coal mining in South Wales during the previous century, though none had any affiliation with the North or the slate mines.

Miranda writes item histories for different pieces, when new items come into the collection, which are primarily used by the conservation staff. She noted that new exhibit or display forming is very difficult at Penrhyn because of the language translation. She claimed that, “Even neighboring towns in the area speak a slightly different dialect of Welsh so, when we are trying to translate, we have to make sure it’s correct” (Interview, July 24, 2010). She noted that the current Communications Officer at the site used to work for the BBC and she is usually responsible for checking all written and audio materials for translation. Because of

this, Miranda hypothesized, displays were slow to change at Penrhyn. According to Miranda, the site, "...sits on many fronts, depends on visitor interests; slave trade, slate/industrial heritage, families/house, the kitchens, and the major art collection" (Interview, July 24, 2010). She did feel that the house displays could use more social history, more history on the family, and further details on how the family became so wealthy. Unfortunately, she notes, "It takes years to plan" (Interview, July 24, 2010).

Miranda, like William and Jane also brought up the National Trust as an, "English heritage organization with similar properties to this" (Interview, July 24, 2010). Unlike the Welsh heritage organization CADW, the National Trust does not have, "...a strong Welsh plan, there is no specific Welsh presentation of things" (Interview, July 24, 2010). All in all, in Miranda's opinion, things were the way they were at Penrhyn because of funding, temporal, and linguistic issues. The combination of these three elements created an accurate but very "safe" version of the history of the house, the family, and the industry.

One final employee I interviewed was Dewy, a railway museum seasonal employee. The railway museum is not open during the winter because it is primarily outdoors, while the castle itself remains open all year long. The railway museum has four full-time (seasonal) employees and one part-time interpreter. During the off season, most of these men live off the welfare system as jobs in the area are difficult to find, especially temporary positions. Dewy's interview provided a different perspective from the previous members of staff, mainly due to his background.

Dewy was originally from Bethesda, the location of Penrhyn's mine and the longest industrial action strike in Britain. Clearly, Dewy is quite a rarity among his Bethesda counterparts, especially considering his family did in fact work in the slate industry. Dewy

had a personal interest in the mines and the history of the family which brought him to the museum. Dewy noted that, “The [slate] industry is used to define the Welsh along with the choirs, Eisteddfod; along with the coal mines in the South, slate in the North” (Interview, July 24, 2010). Dewy noted also that, “Through working here you get to learn how the country feels about different aspects of things like politics” (Interview, July 24, 2010). He went on to note the reluctance of current Bethesda residents to set foot at the museum but also said that, when talking to visitors and other employees alike, you learn their perspective on different issues.

In regards to the specific displays at the museum, Dewy noted that, “Yes, what you read is fact—very well researched” (Interview, July 24, 2010). Through his own research, he confirmed the few displays that did relate to the slate industry as well as the stark class divisions between Lord Pennant and his employees. He took a more neutral stance in stating that, “one [side] could not understand the other” (Interview, July 24, 2010). He said that this was primarily the reason for the bitterness and resentment that still plagues the area. He went on to say that,

“The Penrhyns were a good family with a bad rap because of the strike, but that was just one man. Before, everything was fine. The locals must remember they built hospitals, schools, roads. He’s portrayed in a bad light because people want to. If they looked more into the history of the area and family, they would realize they’ve done a load of good (Interview, July 24, 2010).”

Dewy concluded the interview by stating that the tourism industry in North Wales has done a good job portraying the people and the industry by simply showing how things were historically. The sites do not really do anything for the local community, though apparently attempts have been made. All in all, Dewy felt that there was not much wrong with how the

industry and the Welsh were portrayed. On the other hand, though aware of the lingering bitterness and empathetic toward the reasons for such, he did not feel that it was appropriate.

As shown in the above interview responses, the employees at Penrhyn were incredibly accommodating and willing to share their perspectives with me without question. In fact, the Visitor's Service Manager proved to be the most helpful in that he would frequently either walk me to or call employees on duty to the main office to enable me to interview these individuals from whom, he felt, I would receive even more information. I know my presence there must have been somewhat inconvenient, especially since summer is the busiest season at any of the heritage sites in the area. Nonetheless, William made the time to ensure I was getting the information I was searching for and, of course, having a positive experience at the site. I can not help but wonder if part of the willingness to help my research was due to the fact that heritage is a customer service industry. Although I disclosed my status as a researcher, my satisfaction toward my experience was something important to the site manager. Therefore, he seemed much more willing to assist me without much thought. However, to this same end, I could not help but wonder if some of the responses I was receiving, especially from the Guest Services Managers, William and Jane, were less than completely genuine. They both mentioned their goals for the site which included gaining more local control and reaching out to the surrounding community but, in actuality, seemed to make small, if insignificant, steps toward either. Given that they knew my broad topic of research was *Welsh* heritage, I can imagine that, especially being a National Trust site, they would assume I would like to hear about how they have made connections with the local community. Since this was not currently the case, the next best option was for these individuals to tell about their *plans* to make such connections.

The displays at Penrhyn mask the historic struggles between the working-class miners and the elite slate barons (Gale 1996:291). Though current site administrators claim this is just the way things are at Penrhyn, clearly there was a pragmatic reason to create such displays. This reason is appeal—to appeal to the tourist which the National Trust traditionally markets. However, this has helped to perpetuate the linguistic, socio-economic, and ethnic divides in the surrounding area. It inadvertently perpetuates the idea of cultural capital as determined by those in power. The inclusion of the servants' kitchen was intended to highlight life of the “ordinary” people to which locals were apparently quite receptive. However, this again perpetuates class divisions between laborers and the aristocracy. The displays at Penrhyn maintain this division and the reliance on those with power to support the livelihood of North Wales. Site administrators at Penrhyn and the larger trust organization are acutely aware of visitor statistics; that is, the types and tastes of visitors they are receiving (Richards 1996:261). Currently, there is little incentive to change this, at least at the larger organizational level. The goal of the National Trust is to conserve; in the case of Penrhyn it is not only conservation of a historic property, but also preservation of class divisions.

The presentations also speak to political ideology in maintaining the position of Wales under the larger umbrella of the United Kingdom. Although both Visitors' Service Managers alluded to stronger regional control, this has been and continues to be a slow process. Further, even if each National Trust site does gain more control over their own displays, they are still under the larger organization without any significant or tangible autonomy. As noted in the previous chapter, site staff are not required to have any knowledge or experience in the heritage field so the majority of the workforce still lacks specialized skills and subsequently, job security. All in all, the ideology which comes

through after analyzing the displays at Penrhyn is that of maintaining the current system of little local political control and, additionally, placing the economic future solely in the hands of heritage tourism which markets to those who hold the power to influence heritage presentations.

The National Slate Museum

The National Slate Museum proved to be a more difficult location to conduct formal interviews. At Penrhyn, I was able to interview employees during their shifts. The employees at the Slate Museum were much fewer and often the only one for any particular position on any given shift. One of the more formal interviews I was able to carry out was that with the Education Officer. I was never able to interview the museum curator himself, even after repeated attempts to contact him. Nonetheless, Annie, the Education Officer, did provide an interesting perspective.

Annie was actually from England, in North Wales studying geology. Unsurprisingly, she was there to study slate in particular. This is why, as she shared on a quarry tour, she came to work for the Slate Museum. However, the tours she primarily gave were centered on the history of the industry and the workings of the quarrying teams. She would start her tours showing pictures of men working on the rock face, taking visitors to different locations of the quarry and having visitors imagine the conditions and life in such a dangerous environment. Upon talking to her personally, she said about the industry that, “It’s not a terrible life, it was hard work but all miners had their own farming patch so they had food to eat, raised a few chickens, sheep and cows” (Interview, July 27, 2010). She also noted, however, that, “They [the miners] had no choice. All did the mining no matter who you were” (Interview, July 27, 2010). Here, she is referring to the fact that the mines and quarries offered one of the only

employment options in the area at the time. She seemed to stray a bit from the standard presentation at the site which remembers the industry and the miners with pride and without pity. She tended to highlight some of the more challenging and unfortunate aspects of working in the mines.

Later however, she brought up some of the recurring themes and commonly understood positive aspects of the mining industry such as the cabanod and generous donations from the mine owners (both Penrhyn and Assherton-Smith). She noted that, “Cabans were a creative outlet along with football teams, debates, choirs, religion” (Interview, July 27, 2010). She went on to say that this particular institution was a necessity and not a choice, just like life in the mines. They were a necessity to make life more livable and enjoyable when working in such an industry. She also noted that, “The hospital was built by Assherton-Smith but this was before welfare so they would take one shilling from your paycheck for services” (Interview, July 27, 2010). She presumed that the message was the way it was because the museum was funded by the national assembly.

Another employee, Tecwyn, as mentioned in the previous chapter, had no work experience in the mines but was formerly a Padarn Park Ranger turned museum guide. He was new to the Slate Museum so he was still learning the complete story of slate. He told me that, although he did not have any experience in the mines himself, some of the other employees did from the time either just before the mines closed in the 1970s, or in the past twenty years after a couple of the mines reopened. However, aside from the actual slate splitting itself this more modern slate experience was different to what is portrayed at the museum due to mechanization. Tecwyn felt that his more experienced counterparts knew

much more about the industry, the politics, and the history. He did, for the most part, seem to agree with the museum displays and the image of the Welsh which was being presented.

Upon talking to Sion, another employee who had worked in the mines, the museum displays had changed since the museum opened its doors in the 70s. He noted that a miner at Dinorwig had opened the museum which, at the time, was mostly a speaking and demonstration focused presentation. Miners recently out of work came to work at the site and demonstrated what they had always done. It was not until Dr. Roberts came on as curator over 20 years prior that physical display boards with images and writing were installed. Over the years, the curator also added a series of films and reconstructed houses to create a more formal museum atmosphere. According to Sion, however, the image of the industrious Welsh miner remained constant throughout the years because of its “importance to the Welsh” (Interview, July 29, 2010). He noted that, “[slate mining] was the Welsh identity; we remember it” (Interview, July 29, 2010).

Through contacts at both Penrhyn and the Slate Museum, I met Jeff. Jeff was a craftsman, originally from Manchester, whose work was one of a few efforts to invest in the local community and create more jobs. A woodworker by trade, Jeff had also lived in the United States and taught his woodworking techniques at the university level. His parents lived in North Wales which was part of the reason that brought him there. He also felt it important to revive crafting, especially in an area where there is such little investment. Currently, Jeff noted, “Craft today is more like a hobby but historically it was life” (Interview, July 19, 2010). He was specifically referring to the slate mining industry; the men who worked the mines, according to Jeff, practiced their craft and made an income.

This created North Walians, "...as 'a people,' [the mines] formed character, tenacity" (Interview, July 19, 2010).

He had visited two of the three slate mining heritage sites in the area (Penrhyn and the Slate Museum) and noted that their depictions of the Welsh were quite accurate in regards to their 'craft.' According to Jeff, it was, "Hard work, but they learned to work with materials. It was a hard life but young people today have no concept of how hard. People feel sorry for the way their parents were treated. People have the *right* to feel sorry for themselves" (Interview, July 19, 2010). He went on to say that in an area where there was nothing else but slate, "[the industry] fashioned a people, demoralized a region. People were expendable cogs that drove the machine" (Interview, July 19, 2010). He also claimed the industry was "soul destroying," because of the long hours and intensive labor, the men who worked in the mines, he felt, were not able to lead completely fulfilling lives (Interview, July 19, 2010). Though skill was required, the work was "mindless" and the quarries led to a breakdown of the family structure, according to Jeff (Interview, July 19, 2010). He also claimed that the tourist industry did not help the current situation, especially in its focus on class divisions and separation of power between the mine owner and the miner.

Jeff had several reasons why economic and social conditions were as such in the local area. Partly, he felt that people were inappropriately holding on to the bitterness and resentment from times past which, despite local government attempts to rejuvenate the area and foster new business growth, has become somewhat of an excuse. He claimed that historically, "You didn't have a choice. Work or starve. There was no welfare, no excess work or money" (Interview, July 19, 2010). He also noted that today, "It's just money, no satisfaction in work" (Interview, July 19, 2010). According to Jeff, the culmination of these

factors means that, “[people] focus on their perceived situation, they feel they won’t be able to rise out” (Interview, July 19, 2010). Therefore, especially in county Gwynedd, in an economy that is primarily tourism and public works, Jeff felt that current conditions and lack of motivation coupled with a minimal understanding of historical conditions was the reason why there are not a plethora of jobs and development in North Wales. Through woodworking classes and an opportunity for students of his courses to receive training and initial funding to start their own business, Jeff hoped to at least help a few individuals make a life for themselves which would, in turn, motivate more to follow similar paths.

For the same reasons that I feel I may have received some non-genuine responses from employees at Penrhyn, I feel employees at the Slate Museum were much more enthusiastic about talking to me *because* I was interested in and researching Welsh heritage. Given not only the presentations at the site, but also the perspectives of employees at the site, it seems that individuals at the National Slate Museum wanted to share their story and educate anyone on the industry who was willing to listen. By speaking with me and responding to my questions about heritage and the site itself, employees and those closely associated with the industry were able to tell me the *correct* version of history and set the story straight as it were. Further, my limited Welsh became an endearing quality which, though I was an American researcher, set me apart from other non-Welsh visitors to the site because I had some familiarity with the language and had demonstrated a conscious effort to learn the language that many at the site held dear. Perhaps it was also the case at the National Slate Museum, but I did not get the impression that any of the interview responses were enhanced or made safe for my approval. I do feel that both the pride in and the effects of the industry, as presented to me, were how these individuals truly understood them.

Like Penrhyn, the presentation at the National Slate Museum also serves as a metaphor for social relations and a different perspective on what is best for the future of Wales. The presentations at the Slate Museum present a working-class dignity and pride in the industrial processes that shaped this region of Wales. With an emphasis on employing former miners with direct ties to the industry, the National Slate Museum actively presents Welsh/English political, economic, linguistic, and social divisions. These representations are all symbolic for complete independence and political devolution⁴¹ from the United Kingdom. Rather than maintain the current internal colony status, the slate museum implies a shift toward a Welsh speaking, politically independent nation would be the best move for Wales both nationalistically and economically. Though tourism clearly remains a large part of this notion, there is little attempt to meet the demands of those who would be unsympathetic, or at the very least non-empathetic, with this struggle for independence and the reclaiming of a distinct identity. The goal at this site is cultural revival and maintenance over the drive to capitalize on the tourist market and commoditize heritage.

Ironically, as demonstrated through contesting statements by the education director, as well as seen in the muting of different positions within the mine labor ranks, there is still some residual contention as to political support. Again, as highlighted previously, there is divided political support for both the Labour and the Welsh Nationalist Party. Though both parties have a strong following in the surrounding communities, neither has the overwhelming majority. Both propose possible economic fixes for the future but one is more closely associated with Britain whereas the other is more closely aligned with Welsh

⁴¹ Refers to political, economic, and national autonomy from the United Kingdom. Complete devolution for Wales would require a complete separation from the British government to achieve sovereignty.

independence. Such is translated in the displays at the National Slate Museum where there is reference to a more stratified society at the height of the slate mining industry, but for the sake of solidarity and the goal of creating a distinct identity, this contradiction is overlooked. Presenting a homogeneous image adds to the authority of the implicit ideology at the National Slate Museum. Portraying a moral majority to which all members subscribe legitimizes this particular ideology which is driven by the goal of achieving an autonomous Wales.

Llechwedd Slate Caverns

Through contacts at both the castle and the Slate Museum, I was put in contact with Arwell, a professor at Bangor University who worked specifically in community development. He was originally from North Wales and knew much of the history of the area, including that of the slate industry. Although I was never told whether his family did or did not work in the mines in previous generations, Arwell did tell me that he has never been to Penrhyn Castle. He was aware of their displays to a seemingly large degree; he knew that very little information was conveyed regarding Lord Penrhyn as well as of the recent addition of the “Sugar and Slavery” exhibit. He also knew that there was only brief focus on the financing for and development of the slate quarries. He did not explicitly state why he had not visited the site but perhaps his reasons were similar to those of the older generations of the area.

I did discover Arwell had been to the National Slate Museum and approved of its displays and presentation. He noted that their displays had changed within the past twenty years or so, “They needed updating but now are ok” (Interview, July 28, 2010). He felt that, for Penrhyn Castle to bring in more local support, the museum interpretations could include

more on Bethesda itself and the struggle of the miners. He reiterated that the National Slate Museum was a public museum which was cause for its displays. They needed to appeal to the local audience in order to maintain support from the local communities. In Arwell's opinion, Llechwedd's displays, on the other hand were, "revolting" (Interview, July 19, 2010). Again, he did not elaborate to a great degree but essentially noted that the goal, as a private attraction, was to make money. Rather than focusing on true history through the telling of facts, the *rides* essentially focused on insignificant aspects of the miner's experiences like the visit of Lloyd George to the local area, further playing on stereotypes of the Welsh such as men's choirs and harp music.

Through his own work and experience at the university, Arwell had realized how the process of industrialization to de-industrialization, including labor history and class relations during these periods, had greatly influenced what locals currently think about the nature of the Welsh economy. There was a time (during the 1960s and 70s) when a push for local rule replaced much of the English middle class who had previously capitalized on the labor force. However, once local rule was achieved, combined with the decline of industry, there were not enough jobs to support the local population and no outside investment. Arwell highlighted the fact that these issues, over 40 years later, are still the main issues for the area which motivated him to achieve his current position within the community development field.

Llechwedd Slate Caverns was the least informative by means of formal interviews. First and foremost, the majority of employees at Llechwedd were less than twenty years old. All the young men operating the rides fit into this category and were not largely aware of the history of the industry aside from what they briefly learned in school or through the site. The

older gentlemen working at the site either operated the trains or did slate splitting demonstrations with little incentive to interact with visitors. At this site, there seemed to be little initiative to share the story of slate. Ironically, as a private, money-making venture, there was equally little incentive for creating a positive customer service experience. Clearly, most customers are initially drawn to the site through marketing and advertisements for a fun and exciting day out with the family rather than an educational and historical experience.

Upon entering the site, the site manager is more than willing to convince visitors to not only take one tram tour, but both the Deep Mine and cavern tours. Again, during his speech, there was no focus on education or history. Although he was not willing nor able to interview for apparent time constraints, I attempted to ask how and why particular information was chosen and what version of the slate story Llechwedd was trying to present. The owner told me that their displays had changed very little since the opening of the site in the 70s. Although the light and sound displays have, of course, been updated to meet audience demand, the actual recordings and story have not. The owner also told me that the information presented at the site is *common knowledge* about the industry and that anyone from the area or familiar with the history of North Wales would tell me the exact same information. It would seem that Arwell was correct in notifying me that this location primarily focuses on Welsh cultural and national stereotypes rather than an *authentic* history by noting relatable cultural practices like the music festival or lunch break without going into more detail on why each of these things has remained so significant in local memory. As noted in the guide book, the owner was sure to mention to me the various tourism awards the site had won in rekindling interest in the industry and history. Unfortunately, I was not able

to get more information on how these awards are decided. However, since the mid-80s and early 90s no new tourism awards have been received.

As referenced above, Llechwedd was not nearly as accommodating as either of the previous two sites. I could put forward many reasons for the lack of accommodation and in actuality, it may be a combination of factors. I was initially told by the manager that he did not, nor did any of his employees, really have time to be interviewed. This, to some degree, is not untrue. As mentioned previously, summer is the busiest season for all of the heritage sites and the flow of visitors was constant whenever I visited Llechwedd. Further, being the most popular of the three, there was bound to be comparably more traffic. Therefore, I can understand that, especially during their shifts, it would be difficult to have an extensive discussion about the site and the presentation of the industry, especially when some of the positions require running heavy machinery like the trams, splitting slate, and briefly describing tools of the industry to visitors just prior to the cavern tours. However, a secondary reluctance to interview might also have been the fact that, as was demonstrated by the current manager, little fact-checking and historical attention had been paid to creating the displays within this site. Identifying myself as researching Welsh heritage through the medium of the slate industry may have signaled a warning that I, as a visitor to the site, may actually have a knowledgeable background on the industry and perhaps would question what the site *should* be presenting. Rather than allow me to question why this site presents the aspects of the industry it does, which seem to be of little importance socially and historically, it was easier to come up with a convenient and not wholly untrue excuse as to why interviews would not be feasible with the employees at this location.

Llechwedd Slate Caverns most overtly reinforces the push toward reliance on foreign investment as an economic revitalization strategy. Though it is difficult to compete with other, larger tourist attractions on continental Europe especially being situated in the North West corner of Wales, Llechwedd has achieved top 10 visitor attraction status within Wales. This site has been successful at reaching out to a broader European audience, namely English, French, and German tourists. Because of this, it has achieved the status of the most popular industrial tourist site in Wales (Edwards and Llurdes I Coit 1996:349). Rather than reliance on local government authorities, Llechwedd also speaks to the investment of private institutions as the best move forward.

As a renovator, Llechwedd has transformed the physical setting of the slate mine into something completely new, serving an entirely different function in order to recover some of the losses from unemployment after the initial mine closures (Edwards and Llurdes i Coit 1996:359). With this renovation, however, authenticity was replaced by tourist appeal. Therefore, Llechwedd has taken advantage of the regional, collective history in a manner that appeals to foreign investment as an effort to recover from economic downturn and revitalize the local community through the help of the international tourist.

Conclusion

As previously established, the viewpoints of site creators greatly influence information which is chosen for presentation at heritage sites. The original ideologies under which each site was created have not only been maintained but also reinterpreted in the contemporary community and national context. Penrhyn Castle was acquired by the National Trust as a building worthy of conservation. Not only was the physical site conserved but more importantly, so were the aristocratic ideals of cultural and symbolic capital. Even

though site employees maintain that greater regional control *would* be beneficial to reach out to the local communities, there is still little drive to do so. The relationship between this site, the National Trust, and the local community is similar to that of the quarry owner and the miner where minor acts to benefit the local community are made but have little effect on the larger scale. This ideology is maintained by the way in which the displays at Penrhyn Castle have not only been maintained since their creation but further, the way in which they prolong unequal power relationships between the tourist and the toured community.

Both the National Slate Museum and Llechwedd Slate Caverns were established within three years after the mine closures as an attempt to counteract job losses. However, each site has taken a different direction regarding which audience to focus its displays. The former Chief Engineer of Dinorwig wanted to tell the history of slate and establish a site where the history of the industry could be persevered and reflected upon with pride and integrity by the surrounding communities. The National Slate Museum focuses presentations for those interested in learning the history of the industry as well as the significance of Welsh cultural traditions. This ideology has not only been maintained but translated into a statement about larger Welsh economic and political relations. Through a telling of Welsh history through the Welsh miner perspective, the site now symbolizes Welsh independence from Britain.

Llechwedd Slate Caverns, as noted above, was created with the similar goal of recovering job loss. However, the underlying ideology behind the creation of this site was to bring in as much revenue as possible. Originally, this meant creating an attraction where visitors could experience the industry for themselves; creating a relatable experience. Within the contemporary economy, this drive has transitioned to attracting as many foreign tourists

as possible. No longer does a simple tram ride meet this demand. Euro Disney caliber light and sound displays, as well as meeting the language and translation needs for a diverse array of visitors are the methods which Llechwedd uses to capitalize on the historically imprecise heritage presented to tourists. As such, Llechwedd is, by far, the most popular tourist attraction of the three and one of the top 10 within Wales as a whole. Llechwedd is then, in relation to the pre-established economic ideologies, a prime example of how effective the reliance on private and foreign investment can be for regional economic stability in the context of heritage tourism.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The slate mining heritage sites of North Wales commemorate the industrial history of the area by differently representing three widely accepted views of not only the past but also the future (Zerubavel 1996:106). Each site retells the story of slate while symbolizing separate “gazes” for the advancement of Wales both politically and economically (Johnson 1999:195). After the decline of slate demand and export, tourism was determined by the Welsh Tourist Board as the most promising economic venture for North Wales. At each of the three slate heritage sites, heritage has become the commodity which is marketed to both local and international audiences (Harvey 1989:63). In each case, the history of slate has been reworked and constructed to fit the appeal of differing audiences to which each site tailors its displays. These displays are not only influenced by the site creators but have been reinterpreted in the contemporary context by site employees to represent three primary political and economic options which Wales has to move into the future. The displays at Penrhyn are most symbolic of Wales maintaining political status under the British government. Economically, tourism is maintained by heritage displays which meet the demands of domestic, English tourists. Presentations at the National Slate Museum symbolize a culturally and politically autonomous Wales which is sustained through tourism presenting unique *Welsh* cultural traditions. Llechwedd Slate Caverns establishes foreign relationships where tourist displays meet the demands of the international audience in order to attract higher numbers of visitors.

Heritage site representation, as demonstrated above in the case of North Wales, can be used as a tool in the struggle of the oppressed to establish and maintain a distinct identity

or for the maintenance of historical social and class divisions (Harvey 1989:289). Through heritage sites, historically based-identities which maintain class relations may be presented as a way to maintain the status quo. Conversely, new identities may be established and portrayed through heritage sites as a representative venue where the collective voice of the group is presented. In either instance, each site will minimize historical conflict and overlook contradiction to some degree, as a way of presenting an authoritative image (Dahles 2001:8). With the case of Penrhyn, Victorian aristocratic values are maintained through displays which cater to the tastes of the historical elites. The ideals of customer demand directly reflect the historical aristocracy whose tastes and preferences were symbols of class power over the working classes. Little reference is made to the working class and therefore, the middle and upper class tourists in this context are those who maintain power through demand. This translates to the larger, underlying image presented at the site which speaks to a tourist industry dominated by the non-local, non-working-class tourist. Further, similar to the site of Penrhyn preserved under the control of the National Trust, the castle represents an ideology of Wales retained by the British government. The presentations at Penrhyn support the tourist system in Wales as the primary economic venture, dominated by the status quo.

Conversely, the National Slate Museum presents an identity distinct from the English and, additionally, a stance against the historic aristocracy. The underlying message of the Slate Museum is Welsh independence from the larger United Kingdom economically, socially, and politically through a restoring of power to the “moral majority” (Harvey 2005:84). The displays at this site are implicitly tools for the political cause of self-rule and self-reliance through industry. The switch from the slate industry to the tourist industry is remembered with pride by the former miners who still represent the industry as guides at the

museum. This pride is also portrayed to local visitors and those with genuine curiosity for the history of the industry. The goal is distinction from rather than adherence to the historical system in an attempt to gain symbolic power.

Lastly, Llechwedd Slate Caverns truly represents the image that is demanded by foreign tourists rather than presenting a history which includes the intricacies of the story of slate (Poria et al. 2003:240). Symbolic for a reliance on private business and foreign investment, Llechwedd minimally focuses on the political and social struggles inherent in the history of the slate mining industry. Rather, the site creators have chosen a story which is distinct enough to draw in foreign tourist audiences but becomes relatable through physical ventures through the mine caverns. As one of the most popular attractions in the whole of Wales, and the most popular slate mining attraction, this site presents the larger economic ideology of foreign and private investment as the most successful means by which Wales can economically support itself.

This research has demonstrated not only how creators of heritage sites select particular historical elements while overlooking others to develop a particular image and market to a particular audience but, more importantly, how these displays then become symbolic for differing, larger ideologies regarding the future of the community. These ideas can be applied to future heritage site research to determine not only how heritage sites have been shaped by the local community but further, how they are symbolic of different political and economic viewpoints and potentially act as voices for such. Researching this relationship can be taken one step further to determine the reciprocal relationship heritage sites have with the communities in which they are situated. That is, not only is it valuable to determine how heritage site displays have been shaped by site creators and the context of the community

where they are located, it may be equally telling to determine how the images and presentations within heritage sites affect the surrounding communities.

One potential path future heritage research could take would be to relate implicit heritage site ideologies to local conceptions of identity. In effect, the next step in this research would be to analyze ‘museum communities’ to understand how the underlying ideologies within community heritage sites have influenced the current conceptions of identity in the local area. The researcher could further determine if and how the heritage sites then act as a voice for the groups which they represent paying specific attention to the practical ways in which heritage presentations are used as political and social tools to achieve a goal or initiate change for the community. Another direction heritage researchers may consider is to determine success models and staying-power for both *commercial* and *authentic* heritage sites. Do sites whose primary incentive is to increase visitors maintain displays and images longer than their counterparts? How do these differing site images and group representations affect the community and identity of those immediately surrounding the site? These are just a few potential, guiding questions and considerations for further heritage research within the broader field of anthropology.

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1



The Penrhyn Slate Quarry by Henry Hawkins, 1832

Appendix 2



Quarrymen's Pedal Cycle

Appendix 3



Saloon Coach

Appendix 4



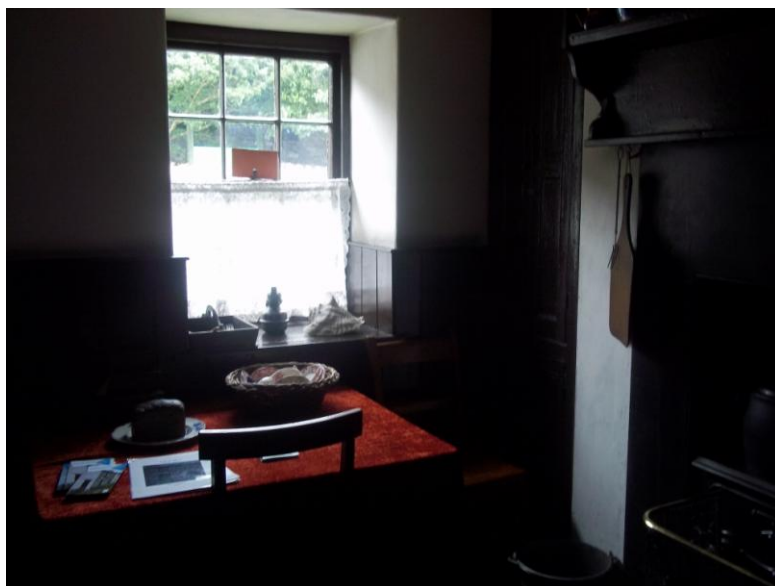
Overseer's Carriage

Appendix 5



Chief Engineer's House

Appendix 6



1901 Quarryman's House

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